やじろべえ②

YAJIROBE NI

山川あいじ

MARGARET COMICS 別冊マーガレット

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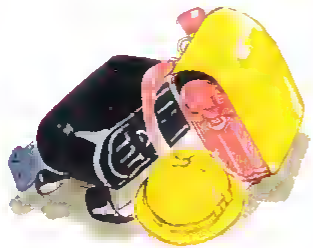
山川あいじ

葉瑠は幼い頃に母親を亡くして以来、義理の父・誠司とふたり暮らし。葉瑠の高校入学に前後して、誠司の実家や幼なじみの凡太、誠司の旧友・千絵さんと、新しい出会いでふたりの世界は広がる。変化していく生活の中で、葉瑠が思い描くふたりの未来は…？



［収録作品］やじろべえ②

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集英社

MARGARET COMICS 別冊マーガレット

Someone asked me, "Do you spend a lot more time on drawing Towa?" But that's not true. All of the characters are precious to me!

Yamakawa Aju

Choucho ni Naru
Futari Bocchi
Namkemono to Haru
Animaniaru
Renren
Chocolate Underground
Tomodachi no Hanashi
Balancing Toy 1~2

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カバーイラスト　山川あいし
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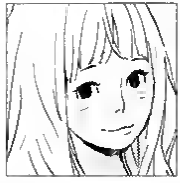
Main characters



Haru

She has just become a first year student at the same high school as Bonta. Seiji is very important to her.

Seiji

Haru's father, though not biologically. He always puts Haru first.

Bonta

Haru's former neighbor. He has an awkward but kind personality. He's one year older than Haru.

Towa

Chie's son. A strange boy who does things at his own pace. He's one year younger than Haru.

Chie-san

Seiji's senpai from university. She is divorced and lives alone with Towa.

Hikari

Haru's best friend since junior high school. She lives alone with her mother.

Kawaba

Seiji's classmate from university and current coworker. He's a little weird.

Grandpa

Recently passed away. He understood Seiji well.

Grandma

Seiji's grandmother. She's old-fashioned and stubborn.

Summary

Haru has lived alone with her step-father Seiji since her birthmother passed away when she was a young girl. As a result of Seiji's grandfather's funeral, Seiji has once again come into contact with his family. At the same time, Haru starts to think about her future father-daughter relationship with Seiji.

The two move out of the apartment they've always lived in. When they take their extra things to the flea market, they meet Chie and Towa.

As Haru's high school entrance exams approach, she reunites with her childhood friend, Bonta. Could this be the start of a romance...?

With all these new faces, Seiji and Haru's everyday life starts to change. What kind of future does Haru picture for the two of them...?

The boring life of kids and their parents

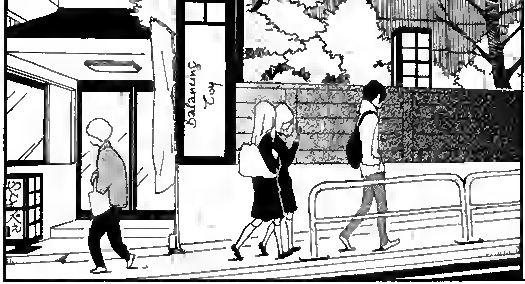
SUMMER FESTIVAL
UNTIL I WAS 6 YEARS OLD, I'D NEVER GONE FURTHER THAN THE GARDEN
SEI-CHAN IS GONE!
SO IS GRANDPA!
A STRICT GRANDMOTHER
OVERPROTECTIVE PARENTS.
THE WRINKLED HAND
HOLDING MINE.

EXCUSE ME.
THERE'S A CHERRY BLOSSOM ON YOUR HEAD
HUH?
OH.
THANK YOU
DID YOU SEE THAT, SEIJI?

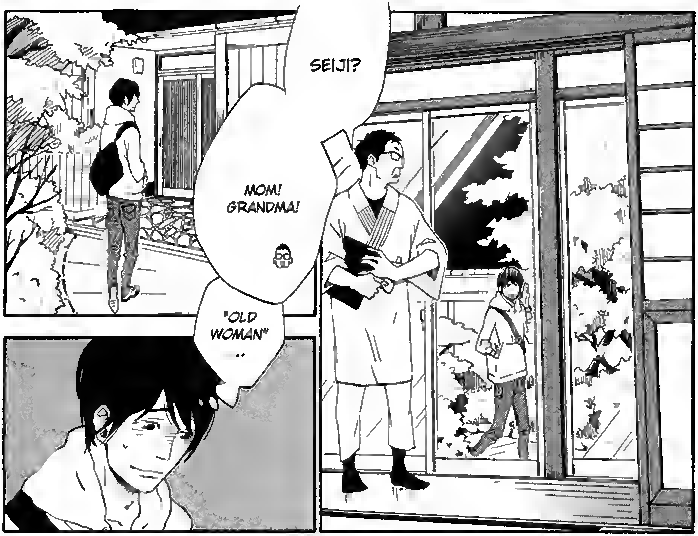
YEAH! THAT!
AREN'T THERE JUST MORE PRETTY WOMEN IN GENERAL NOWADAYS?
SLITTER
THE PRINCIPLE THAT BEAUTIFUL WOMEN ARE SURROUNDED BY OTHER BEAUTIFUL WOMEN
IS REALLY WORKING IN MY FAVOR
BEFORE, WOMEN WERE GIVING IT THEIR ALL TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MEN,
BUT NOW THEY'RE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES
WOMEN COMING HOME FROM WORK. .SO TEMPTING..
YOU RE GROSS.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE TALKING!
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT THE LADIES AT WORK SAY ABOUT YOU. WANNA HEAR?

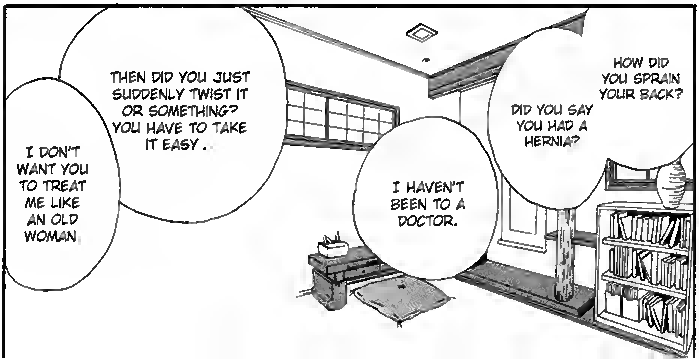
**Means rover otter

*They're implying that he leaves work every day, rather than hanging around to socialize, which is generally expected in Japanese companies
WHY AM I HIS FRIEND?!
YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL YOU WERE DESIGNATED AS A PROTECTED SPECIES!
YOU OLD WOMAN-LOVIN' SON OF A...
Oh, my good!
He just said "old woman"!
Oops!
Oops, I meant K-bahata.
ALRIGHT, WELL, SEE YA TOMOR-ROW,
KAWA-USO**
THEY CALLED YOU "SEIJI-MAN",
SEIJI*



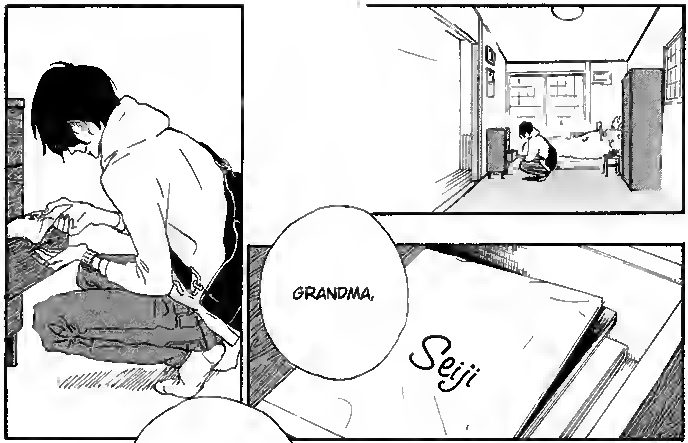
I WAS ESTRANGED FROM MY FAMILY FOR SO LONG.

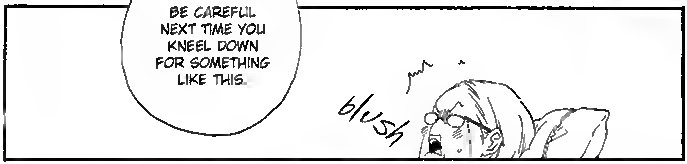



THEN DID YOU JUST SUDDENLY TWIST IT OR SOMETHING? YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT EASY.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO TREAT ME LIKE AN OLD WOMAN.
I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A DOCTOR.
DID YOU SAY YOU HAD A HERNIA?
HOW DID YOU SPRAIN YOUR BACK?

HAS ANYONE FROM YOUR GENERATION HEAR OF A THING CALLED "BITING THE BULLET"!?
OK THEN, REST UP!
MO-THER!
I BROUGHT YOU YOUR TEA!
I-I DIDN'T MEAN---...YOUR CARTILAGE, HUH...? SOUNDS PAINFUL...
IT MUST REALLY HURT YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT ON A BRAVE FACE.
Girl
DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A SICK PERSON!
But Seiji came all the way here to see you!
Nobody asked him to!
AC-TUALLY, SHE GRADUATED!
I wonder when Ren-chan will come to visit next?
I'm so glad we have a grand-daughter
DON'T BE SO NERVOUS
AS THE ONLY MAN IN THE HOUSE, I ALWAYS HAVE TO WALK WITH MY HEAD DOWN

SHE'S ALREADY AN ADULT, HUH.
SHE'S TURNING 16 SOON.
SO SHE'S THE SAME AGE I WAS WHEN I GOT MARRIED.
I NEVER KNEW THAT.
WHAT?
I MEAN, COULD YOU TELL ME MORE?
LEAVE ME ALONE.
...THEN CAN I GO VISIT GRANDPA?
YOU DON'T NEED TO EXCUSE YOURSELF LIKE THAT. I KNOW HE'S THE ONLY REASON YOU CAME BACK.
BUT I FIGURED, SINCE YOU'RE THE ONE KEEPING THIS HOUSE TOGETHER...
Balancing Toy
SEIJI.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO GIVE YOU, SO TAKE IT IN THE THIRD DRAWER.


GRANDMA,
Seiji

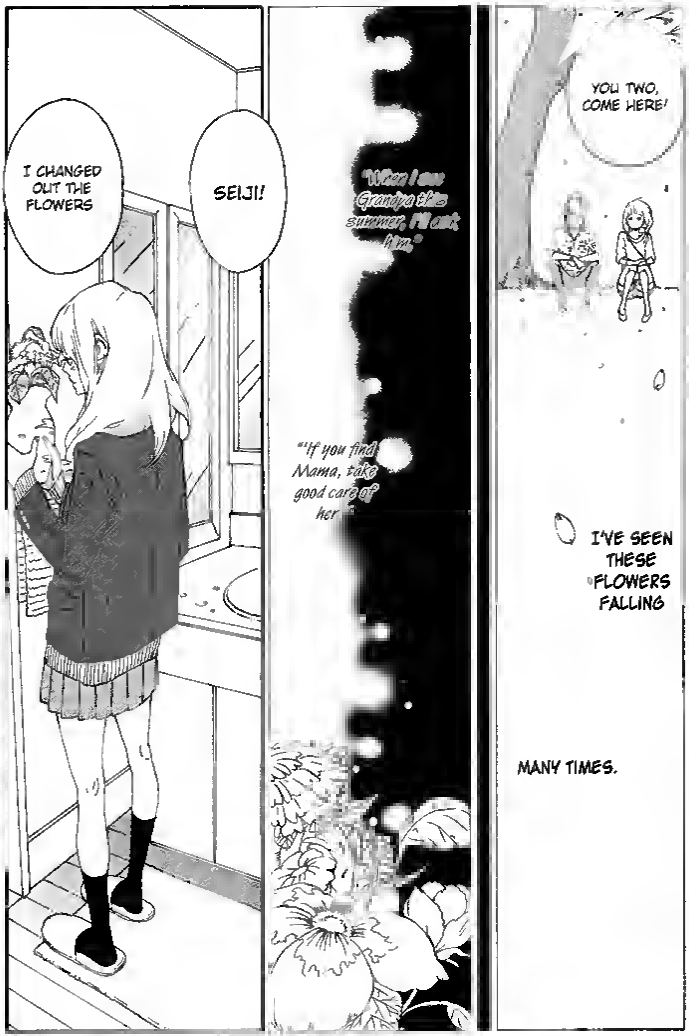

BE CAREFUL NEXT TIME YOU KNEEL DOWN FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
blush

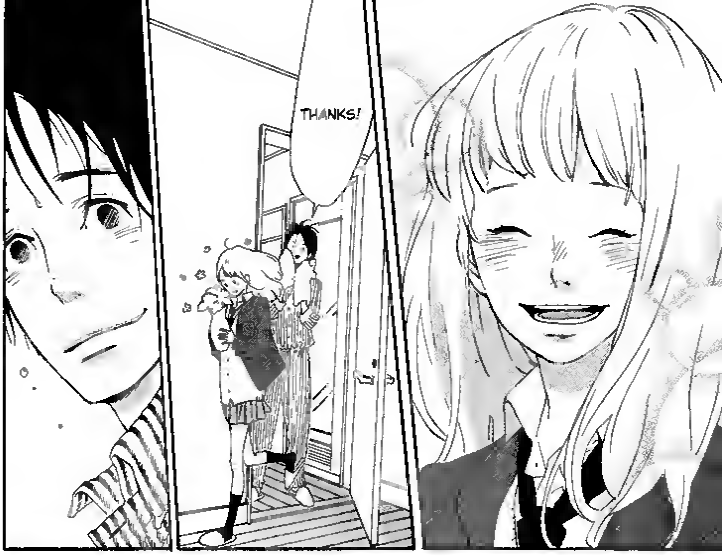
I WENT TO SEE CHERRY BLOSSOMS RECENTLY, TOO.
THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL.
LAST SUMMER, GRANDPA GAVE ME A REASON TO COME BACK HOME.

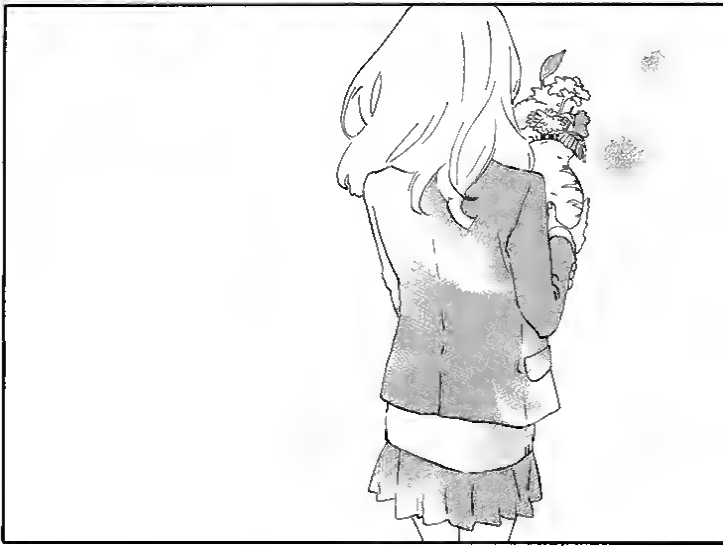
I FEEL THAT MEETING OTHERS IS WHAT DETERMINES OUR LIVES...
CHIE-CHAN, DO YOU WANT TO GOLF TOGETHER?
I HAVEN'T PLAYED ANY SPORTS SINCE COLLEGE
I HEARD GOLF'S POPULAR WITH YOU OFFICE LADIES RECENTLY
CAN'T YOU INTRODUCE ME TO SOMEONE CUTE?
You're in the way!
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN HAD ALCOHOL BUT YOU'RE DRUNK QUIT IT!
SUPPOSEDLY, BEAUTIFUL WOMEN ARE SURROUNDED BY OTHER BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.
I'VE PLAYED A LITTLE TENNIS, SO THAT'D BE FINE TOO!
I LIKE INTERESTING PEOPLE
I WISH YOU WOULDN'T SAY THAT KIND OF THING IN FRONT OF MY SON
UGH

YOU'RE ACTUALLY PRETTY CLUMSY
CHIE-CHAN, EVEN THOUGH YOU LOOK STEADY.
HUH!
YEAH, THEY MIGHT BE STRANGE
MYSTERIOUS WOMEN ARE MORE EXCITING, ANYWAYS!
US MEN UNDER-STAND EACH OTHER.
MOM'S FRIENDS ARE ALL STRANGE, BUT IF YOU'RE OK WITH THAT, COME HANG OUT ANYTIME!
flap flap flap flap
Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha
LOSING THAT KID YOU WERE TAKING CARE OF
I NEVER IMAGINED I'D MEET YOU LIKE THAT, AT THE FLEA MARKET
YEAH
OH NO.
I WONDER IF I MADE A BAD IMPRESSION, MEETING ME AFTER SO LONG...
AND THE LOST KID WAS HARU'S FAULT, TOO
SORRY, YOU MUST'VE BEEN SURPRISED
I DIDN'T THINK I'D MEET YOU THERE, EITHER
BUT I'VE REPENTED,
AND MY FRIEND LECTURED ME ABOUT IT AFTER, TOO
YEAH!
BUT HE'S A GOOD FRIEND, ISN'T HE?
HE'S GOT A REALLY QUESTIONABLE PERSONALITY
LIKE, "JUST TRASH THAT! YOU DON'T NEED IT!"
KAWARATA'S GENERALLY PRETTY SPORADIC

We don't care!
IT WAS ALWAYS GRANDPA WHO TOOK ME OUT TO PLAY
I WAS REALLY SHY BEFORE I GRADUATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
UNTIL YOU MET ME? DON'T BE ASHAMED
I TRY TO INTRODUCE TOWA TO A LOT OF MY FRIENDS, SO HE WON'T STAY COOPED UP INSIDE
It's sweet
OH, WHAT A NICE STORY
You only call me senpai when you're in a good mood, don't!!
Oh, you're so caring! You win, Chie-senpai.
Tell us more, Seiji!


I CHANGED OUT THE FLOWERS
SEIJI!
"When I see Grandpa this summer, I'll ask him."
"If you find Mama, take good care of her."
YOU TWO, COME HERE!
I'VE SEEN THESE FLOWERS FALLING
MANY TIMES.


THANKS!



.....
WHY IS SHE PRAYING LIKE THAT...
PLEASE DON'T LET SEIJI GO BALD!!
Seijin Are you okay?
THERE'RE STILL DISHES IN THIS BOX, SO BE CAREFUL!
SORRY, SORRY!

I'M CAREFUL WHEN I WALK.
LET'S CLEAN UP SOON, THOUGH. NEXT TIME YOU MIGHT GET HURT.
THEY HAVE TO BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE!
WHY ARE YOU SO PICKY ABOUT IT?
WE STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THE RIGHT PLACE FOR A LOT OF IT
THIS IS MY TERRITORY!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANYTHING DONE, SO BE CAREFUL!
I'M NOT BEING SELFISH!
THAT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT! DON'T BE SELFISH!
I'VE NEVER BEEN SELFISH!
thunk
I'M NEVER HELPING YOU AGAIN!
BUT I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CALL THAT COOKING.
YOU DO, THANKS.
AND I HELP YOU OUT ALL THE TIME!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I COOK, TOO
hehehe

NEVER!
REALLY?
NEVER?
NEVER!
I was definately persistent about it, though
I DIDN'T LIE!
YOU LIED YOU SAID YOU'D GIVE IT TO ME!
SEIJI YOU'RE TERRIBLE!
Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on!
THUMP
THESE ARE YOUR ALBUMS.
WHO WAS IT THAT SELFISHLY CONNED MY PRECIOUS CAMERA FROM ME?!
HEY!
DON'T ENTER MY ROOM WITHOUT PERMISSION!
Ahem
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE SELFISH WITH ME, SO I WAS HAPPY.

I WASN'T SELFISH BEFORE THAT..?
YOUR SCHOOL UNIFORM SUITS YOU!
HUH?
IT WAS A PRESENT FOR YOUR GRADUATION, SO TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT.
SEIJI!
I CAN GIVE YOU THE PICTURES
THE LANDLORD GAVE ME...
I MEAN,
I WANT TO!

I THINK THESE WERE THE PHOTOS YOU WANTED TO HAVE BEFORE, SEIJI...
THAT LANDLORD IS A REALLY GOOD PERSON.
AM I WRONG?
IT'S ALREADY BEEN HALF A YEAR SINCE WE MOVED,
BUT WEREN'T YOU SAD TO LEAVE OUR OLD APARTMENT?
NOPE! WERE YOU?
I'VE GOT YOU AND MAMA, SO I'M FINE!
AND I'VE GOT YOU, SO I AM TOO!
OH YEAH? I'M GLAD.
Feed! Feed!

LET'S DO OUR BEST, HARU!

EVERY YEAR,

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE BUDDING GREEN LEAVES.

MORNING.
MORNING, HIKARI.
GETTING USED TO YOUR NEW CLASS?
IT'S OK
I MISS BEING WITH YOU.
YO, ICHIKAWA.
Don't touch my books!
AH, MORNING YOSHIDA.
HE SAW US.
I'M THINKING OF CHECKING OUT THE BASKETBALL CLUB.
YOU'RE GONNA KEEP PLAYING TOO, RIGHT?
DUNNO. I GUESS I CAN JUST CHECK IT OUT.
I WONDER IF YOSHIDA LIKES YOU.
HUH? I DON'T THINK SO.
IT'S LIKE,
HE FOLLOWED YOU ALL THE WAY TO THIS SCHOOL.
I REALLY HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO THAT.

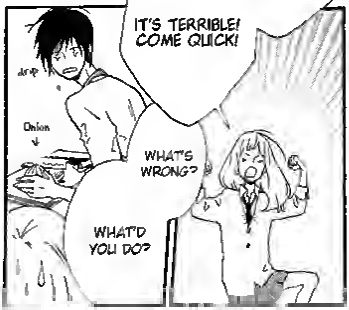
WOW, ICHIKAWA-SENPAI, YOUR CHARACTER BENTO...
OH, DID YOU SAY YOU HAD A DAUGHTER?
HAHA.
I JUST THOUGHT I'D BRING BENTOS FROM NOW ON, TOO.
I DIDN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY...
YOU MADE IT YOURSELF?
YES, IT IS
IS IT STRANGE?
ACTUALLY, I'M LIVING ON MY OWN RIGHT NOW BUT I'VE ONLY JUST STARTED TO COOK.
AND EVEN WHEN I LOOK AT A COOKBOOK
NOTHING COMES OUT RIGHT.
I HAVE NO TALENT HAHA.
WANT ME TO TEACH YOU?
WH-
OK!
GOT IT!
WE'LL TALK MORE LATER.
OK, HITSUKAI-SAN?

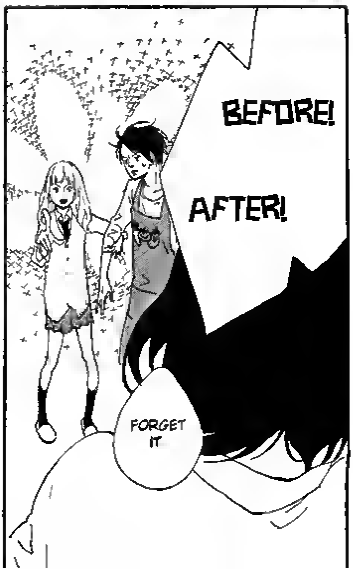
Ehto
HEY!
GOOD WORK TODAY
YOU TOO. GOOD WORK TODAY!
Ha ha
YOU FINISHED?
click click
Actually
I'll get ready to leave now!
YOU SHOULD CHECK THEM OUT!
AND YUMMY DISHES
AND I FOUND A FEW SITES AND BLOGS THAT SHOW YOU HOW TO MAKE SOME SIMPLE
I WAS LOOKING THINGS UP AT LUNCH BREAK,
OH, SHOOT!
...
He must really enjoy this.
THEY'VE GOT A SPECIAL GOING ON AT THE SUPERMARKET, I HAVE TO HURRY.
SEE YA!
LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOT ACCESS RESTRICTIONS UP, SORRY.
I'LL SUE YOU FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

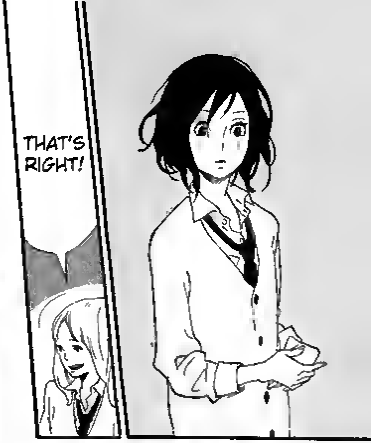
YOU SHOULD GIVE HER THE PICTURE.
I'M HOME.
Rustle
SMART MART
Rustle
WELCOME HOME!
SEIJI, WELCOME HOME!
HELLO, HIKARI-CHAN!
Thump
Thump
Thump
SORRY TO INTRUDE
HUH?
HIKARI, COME HERE.
OK
THIS IS FROM OUR GRADUATION,
AND THIS IS FROM OUR ENTRANCE CEREMONY.
SEIJI MADE US LOOK REALLY CUTE.

AH!
I'M JUST BAD AT IT...
I'M HAPPY THAT HE TOOK THE PICTURES
SEIJI-SAN WANTED YOU TO LOOK CUTE, TOO
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE ALWAYS JOKING AROUND
HIKARI YOU'RE SO PHOTOGENIC
AND THIS IS FROM OUR ENTRANCE CEREMONY
AH!
...
THAT STRANGE STUFFED ANIMAL
OH, I SEE
WHY DON'T YOU MAKE A BOOKMARK?
YOU SHOULD PRESS IT IN A BOOK FOR A WHILE...
YEAH, IT'S A LITTLE BIT WILTED NOW, THOUGH
A FOUR-LEAFED CLOVER
DIDN'T THINK OF THAT!
ALRIGHT THEN, WILL YOU BE MY MODEL?
ARE YOU GONNA BE A CAMERAMAN?
OH, THIS IS SEIJI-SAN'S CAMERA
HE GAVE IT TO ME.

SEIJI!


IT'S TERRIBLE! COME QUICK!
drop
Onion
WHAT'S WRONG?
WHAT'D YOU DO?


BEFORE!
AFTER!
FORGET IT


THAT'S RIGHT!

SEIJI'S FRIEND GAVE ME A MAKEUP KIT.
CAN I TRY TO MAKE YOU CUTER?
IF IT LOOKS GOOD, WE'LL SHOW SEIJI.

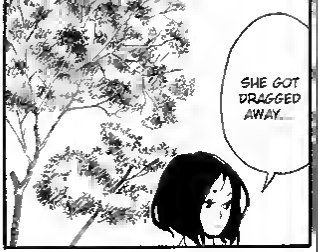
HUH..?
TO SEIJI-SAN...?

I MADE HER EVEN CUTER, RIGHT?
YEAH!
HIKARI-CHAN, WANNA EAT BEFORE YOU GO?
NICE!
NO, I'M FINE.
I'M GOING HOME.
SEE YOU, HARU!
WHY'D YOU PUT MAKEUP ON HER?
WHY DO YOU EVEN HAVE MAKEUP?

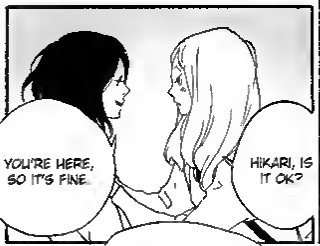
I'LL TAKE HIKARI HOME
thump
thump
HUH?
CHIE-SAN JUST PRETENDS TO BE NICE TO EVERYONE
RIGHT?
FROM CHIE-CHAN
I
BETTER THANK CHIE-CHAN LATER.

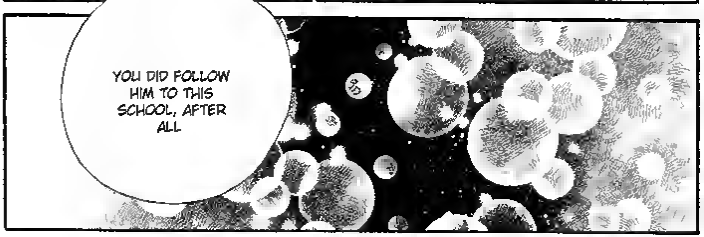
WHO SAID YOU COULD TOUCH IT?
SORRY.
SHUNNING THE FIRST YEARS? LAME

NO ONE'LL JOIN A CLUB LIKE THAT,
AND NO GUYS WILL BE INTO HER, EITHER
IF IT WERE ME I'D STAY AWAY
BONTA.
I WAS JUST WONDERING IF YOU WERE HERE,
AND THEN I SAW YOU JOINING A CLUB?
D-DUNNO
YEAH.
THEY JUST BULLY YOU, ANYWAYS.
GIVE IT UP.
WHO NEEDS CLUBS?
...
BUT IF YOU WANT TO JOIN, I WON'T STOP YOU.
UM.
HM?
YOU FOLLOWING ME?
YOU'RE RIGHT! HAHA.
WHAT?
YOU WANNA GO HOME TOGETHER?


SHE GOT DRAGGED AWAY...

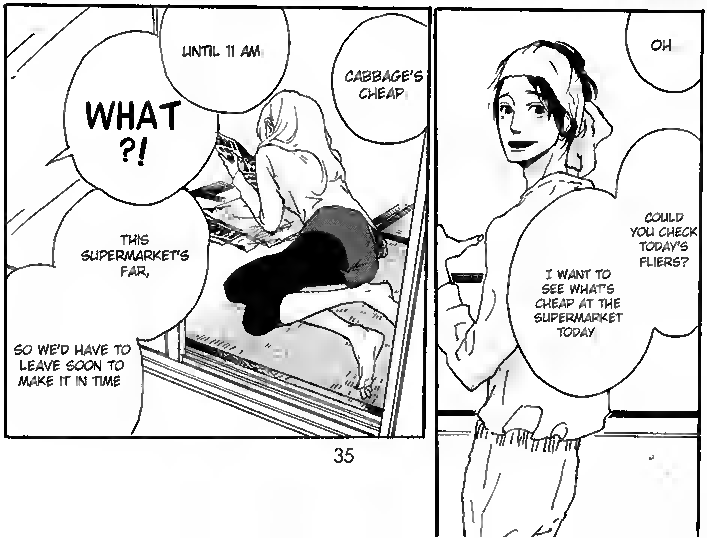
OH!
HIKARI!
HIKARI-CHAN, COME

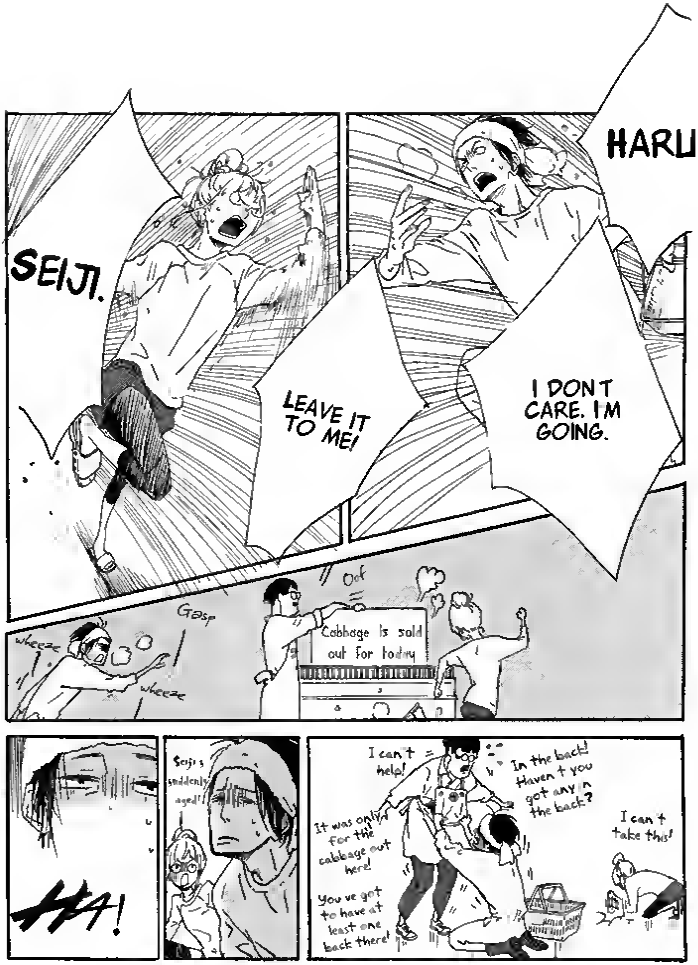

YOU'RE HERE, SO IT'S FINE.
HIKARI, IS IT OK?


YOU DID FOLLOW HIM TO THIS SCHOOL, AFTER ALL

HIKARI-CHAN, YOU'RE SO CUTE.
SEIJI, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M PUTTING SOME CROPS IN.
A VEGE-TABLE GAR-DEN
OH YEAH?

BECOMING A HOMEMAKER?

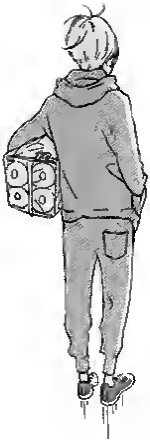

OH
COULD YOU CHECK TODAY'S FLIERS?
I WANT TO SEE WHAT'S CHEAP AT THE SUPERMARKET TODAY
CABBAGE'S CHEAP
UNTIL 11 AM
WHAT ?!
THIS SUPERMARKET'S FAR,
SO WE'D HAVE TO LEAVE SOON TO MAKE IT IN TIME


HARU.
SEIJI.
LEAVE IT TO ME!
I DON'T CARE. I'M GOING.
Oof
Grasp
Wheeze
Wheeze
Cabbage is sold out for today
HA!
Seiji's suddenly aged!
I can't help!
In the back! Haven't you got any in the back?
It was only for the cabbage out here!
You've got to have at least one back there!
I can't take this!

WAI
Only 500 Yen!
Freshly ground!
Bake them, as many as you can fit in a bag.
*Hokkaido prefecture onions 298 Yen
*Gunma prefecture onions
IT SEEMS YOU GAVE HARU SOME PRESENTS!
HAHA!
WHAT A COINCI-DENCE, CHIE-CHAN!
HUHHH!
北海道産
298
CRASH

HA!
LET'S GO! YOU LIKE!
HUH?
SAITO?
MY NAME'S SAITO!
WHAT'S WRONG?
?

Hmph

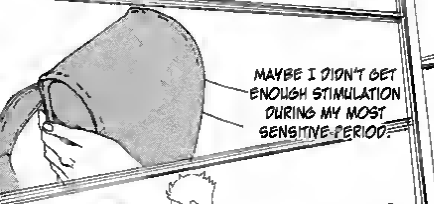


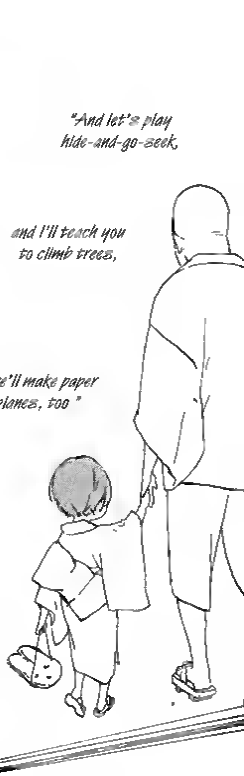
Is your eyesight bad? Che-chan, it's me!
I am cabbage!
Ah! Hey! Wait up! Yousuken I mean, Saito!

HUH?
I SWEAR THAT WAS CHIE-CHAN
TOWA-KUN WAS THERE TOO, RIGHT?
HUHH?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
HMM
wobble wobble
HMM
STRAN-GE
YOU STILL TALKING ABOUT THAT?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WOMEN AT ALL
GOOD NIGHT.
NIGHT.
"Sei-chan,
Towa-kun was there, too, right?

Se chan
so cute!
THEY MADE ME WEAR HAND-ME-DOWNS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD GIRLS.

I WONDER IF THEY THOUGHT THAT BY RAISING ME PEACEFULLY, DISCIPLINE WOULD COME NATURALLY.
BUT I BECAME TIMID.

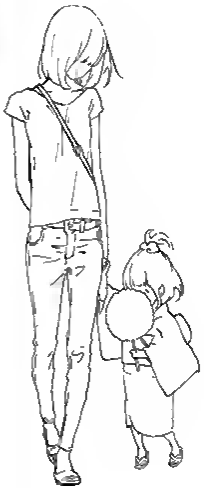

MAYBE I DIDN'T GET ENOUGH STIMULATION DURING MY MOST SENSITIVE PERIOD.


"And let's play hide-and-go-seek,
and I'll teach you to climb trees,
and we'll make paper airplanes, too."

"I'll teach you how to make one that flies really far!"

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL, I WENT TO ALL-BOYS' SCHOOLS.
Can you explain this?
Actually just let me copy
Again?
2-3
Kawahata
SUDDENLY THEY PUT A BLACK BACKPACK ON ME,
Don't worry, it's not like we'll seriously be doing sports
They invited me to join the tennis club, wanna come?
I MADE FRIENDS,
BUT I WAS UNABLE TO FALL IN LOVE.
Hey, that guy just tapped us!
WHERE TO GO.
WHILE I STILL HAD NO IDEA

MY LIFE WAS TORTUOUS BEFORE I MET YOU.



Mr.
Seiji
Ichikawa
rustle

第7話

I WAS TOTALLY SHY,
I THOUGHT IT'D BE FINE FOR ME TO STAY THAT WAY,
BUT EVERYONE AROUND ME TOLD ME I WAS CUTE,
AND WHEN I FINALLY REALIZED THAT I WAS WRONG,
AND I HAD NO PROBLEMS WITH IT...
I'D ALREADY BECOME HOPELESSLY OBTUSE.
SINCE THEY GAVE ME SO MANY THINGS.

"Men should have courage, and women charm."

IT IS SAID THAT,

MEN OUGHT TO BE BRAVE, WHILE WOMEN OUGHT TO BE FRIENDLY AND CUTE.

"COURAGE"
THE POWER TO NOT BE TIMID, OR EASILY PERTURBED.
BRAVERY...
SEIJI, DON'T JUST LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING SOMETHING.
Seiji Ichikawa, 18 years old
WHATEVER, I'M QUITE IMPRESSIVE FOR ALWAYS FINDING YOU.
OOH, THAT BOOK LOOKS HARD.
LOOK AT ALL THOSE SMALL LETTERS!
I'M PRETTY SURE I TOLD YOU I WAS GOING HOME ALONE TODAY.
IT'S JUST A DICTIONARY.
MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GRADUATING SOON... PRACTICING FOR THE CEREMONY IS REALLY DEPRESSING.
...
Y'KNOW, WHEN I'M WITH YOU, I FEEL LIKE LIFE ISN'T SO BAD.
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING COLLEGE WITH YOU TOO.

YEAH...
KAWABATA, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU WANT TO DO?
LIKE, A DREAM...?
LIKE MARRYING A CELEBRITY?
WHAT DOES YOUR DAD DO?
YOU'RE SUDDENLY INTERESTED IN ME?
I JUST THOUGHT WE'VE NEVER HAD THAT KIND OF TALK BEFORE.
stare
.....
The Food Chain and Unequal Society
DOES YOUR FAMILY'S JAPANESE SWEETS SHOP STOCK BOOB PUDDING OR ANYTHING?
OH, MAYBE THAT WOULD COUNT AS WESTERN SWEETS
KAWABATA IS FREE, AND HE CHANGES THE TOPIC WHENEVER HE FEELS LIKE IT, SO HE'S KINDA FUN.

CRAP, I'M SO BORED.
I DECIDED TO LEAVE THIS TOWN
sigh
That means goodbye to you too
My talkative childhood friend, Machiko-chan.
BLAH BLAH
YOU NEVER COMPLAINED ABOUT WEARING MY CLOTHES
YOUR PARENTS SAID WHEN KIDS ARE SMALL THEY GROW OUT OF THEIR CLOTHES SO FAST.
I THOUGHT IT WAS WEIRD THAT YOU LOOKED SO HAPPY TO WEAR MY HAND-ME-DOWNS, BUT I GUESS THEY WERE JUST HAPPY THEY'D RAISED YOU TO BE POLITE.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT TEA CEREMONY AND GOOD MANNERS,
BLAH
BLAH
BLAH
BUT MY PARENTS THINK THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING GOING ON BETWEEN US.
ACTUALLY, THAT REALLY PISSES ME OFF.
IF THEY HAD A GRANDSON, I WONDER IF THEY'D MAKE HIM WEAR GIRLS' CLOTHES TOO.
FREAKIN' WEIRD.
HEHE.

I WON'T STOP. YOU HAVE TO STOP ME! DO IT!
STOP!
JUST LOOKING AT YOU MAKES ME WANT TO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF YOU!
MACHI-KO-CHAN, THAT HURTS
WHAT'S THAT GROSS LAUGH FOR?!
I WAS TALKING ABOUT YOU!
YEAH.
DID YOU JUST LAUGH?
I WONDER WHEN SHE TAKES A BREATH.
NOOOOOO!
YOU FREAKIN' IMPOSTER!
STOP CRYING! I'M GONNA EXPOSE YOU IN FRONT OF EVERYONE,
Pant
Pant
THE HOUSEWIVES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ALL MAKE HIM OUT TO BE SOME CLASSY, WELL-BALANCED GUY...
SEIJI-KUN
Seiji Ichikawa, College Freshman
THIS PIECE OF CRAP!
SHE WAS THE ONLY GIRL I COULD EVER TALK TO.
BUT IN THE END, I REALIZED I DIDN'T WANT TO BE LIKE HER.
I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT MY LIFE MIGHT IMPROVE IF WE SWITCHED PERSONALITIES.

It's like, why did he even join the club?
HEHE, REALLY?
...
OH, HE'S HIDING!
COME TO OUR CLUB'S DRINKING PARTY NEXT TIME, OKAY?
YOU NEVER JOIN US!
OH, THIS GUY'S NO GOOD
HE'S SUPER SHY.
I WISH YOU'D COME WITH US AT LEAST ONCE.
I DON'T KNOW...
IT'S LIKE, "YEAH, HURRY UP AND FIND ME."
REMEMBER HOW SHE SAID, "OH, HE'S HIDING!"
HUH?
ISN'T SAMEJIMA-SEMPAI CUTE?
Ugh, seriously. Why'd you join this club? You're making things tough on me!
IS IT REALLY FUN FOR KAWABATA TO HANG OUT WITH ME?
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, I'VE GOT YOUR BACK
YOU CAN ALWAYS LEAVE EARLY TOO. AT LEAST YOU'D HAVE SHOWED UP.

I FEEL LIKE THIS IS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT.
TODAY'S
SEXY
Yakuza Wives
RIGHT
YOU'LL BE
IS THIS "COURAGE"?
I'VE BEEN TOGETHER WITH SEIJI ICHIKAWA SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL
AND TODAY I WANT TO SING THIS SONG FOR HIM.
No!
Uh, okay, okay. Let's just go! I swear I've got your back
Did I do something wrong?
HEY, SEIJI, YOU LOOK KINDA SICK
BUT HEY, THEY'LL REMEMBER YOU FOR IT, RIGHT?
Sey kun you remind me of someone
Shaw Ankawa, right?
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME WATER?
!
?
rustle

IT MUST BE AMAZING TO BE ABLE TO RELAX ENOUGH TO LOOK AFTER OTHERS.
SO THAT'S JUST YOUR PERSONALITY, SEIJI-KUN
I'M SORRY I FORCED YOU TO COME!
AH, NO—
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE TAKING THE SAME WAY HOME
IS IT OKAY IF WE WALK WITH KAWABATA-KUN AND EVERYONE ELSE?
HE'S REALLY FUN!
WHAT DO YOU TWO USUALLY DO TOGETHER?
NO, I...
OH!
THE LIGHT'S STILL RED!
AH!
PULL

DON'T DO THAT.
.....
YOU HAVE TO LOOK BEFORE YOU WALK
YOU LOOKED A LITTLE SICK BACK IN THE RESTAURANT
I WAS WORRIED. ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M FINE. I CAN GO HOME ALONE
IF HE SAYS SO, I'M SURE HE'LL BE FINE
.....

STARTLE
EXCUSE ME
UM.
THANK YOU FOR THE WATER BACK IN THE RESTAURANT
AND I'M SORRY I SURPRISED YOU.
NOT AT ALL...
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
ALSO, I'M SORRY.
I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS ..
IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT
OH...
I SEE, GOTCHA.
YOU'RE SO HONEST! YOU COULD'VE JUST THROWN IT AWAY

THAT WAS THE DAY I MET MIDORI KUNIYAMA.
THE WAITRESSES WERE ALL EXCITED, SAYING THERE WAS A CUTE CUSTOMER
I WASN'T REALLY PAYING ATTENTION SO I JUST SAID, "STOP!", BUT GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS.
JUST SO YOU KNOW, SHE'S REALLY CUTE.
OH,
DO YOU REGRET IT, NOW THAT YOU KNOW IT WASN'T ME?
NO,
REALLY? YOU AREN'T JUST BEING NICE?
YES.
I'M GLAD I COULD LEARN HOW EARNEST YOU ARE SHY BOY.
Burnable Garbage

Seiji Ichikawa, College Sophomore
YO.
CAN I SIT NEXT TO YOU?
KAWA-BATA
YOU ALWAYS SIT WITHOUT ASKING ANYWAYS, RIGHT?
WELL, YEAH.
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S ME
IT'S LIKE I DON'T HAVE MY FEET ON THE GROUND
YOU'RE A LITTLE QUIET TODAY
THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY I AM. I'M NOT GOOD WITH WORDS.
.....
I GET IT, THAT REACTION
IT'S LIKE, WE SMELL THE SAME OR.. SOME HOW,
I THOUGHT WE'D GET ALONG
BUT IT'S LIKE,
I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE ABOVE YOU.
EVEN THOUGH I WANTED TO BE FRIENDS, SINCE THE VERY BEGIN-NING,
I ONLY SHOWED YOU THIS TOTALLY OPEN SIDE OF ME AND IT'S LIKE, NOW, I CAN'T STOP,
LIKE IF I'M NOT MYSELF IF I DON'T ACT THAT WAY.
SO IT'S LIKE I ATTACHED THIS WEIRD FRIVOLOUS PERSONALITY TO MYSELF

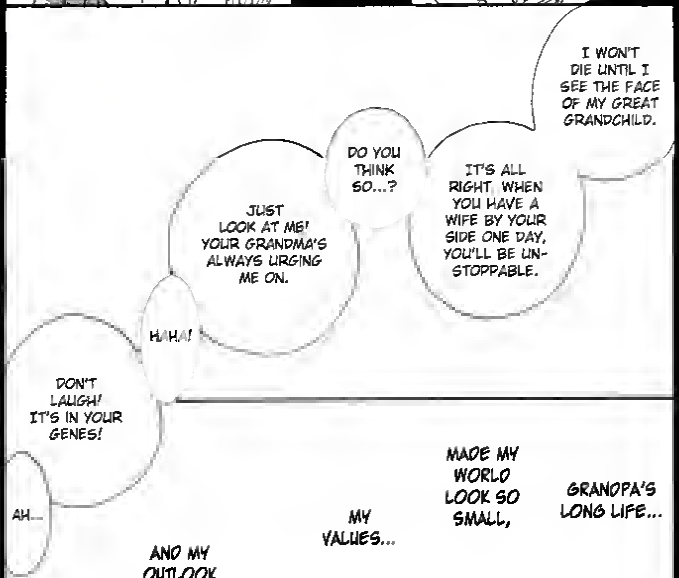
I MEAN, I JUST BROKE UP WITH MY GIRLFRIEND AGAIN
I WANT TO CHANGE SO I PRETEND TO BE LIKE THIS,
DO YOU THINK I'M A USELESS MAN?
BUT DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S STUPID?
EVEN IF YOU'RE LIKE THAT, I'LL BE WITH YOU, SO—
SO, WHAT I MEAN IS,
YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHANGE YOURSELF, OKAY?
I SERIOUSLY WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY!!
FOR REAL? YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD GUY!
I DON'T THINK SO...
HUH?
WELL, DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE
WHAT, WERE YOU DUMPED TOO?
YEAH
YOU'RE SO LUCKY!
YOU'RE THE HEIR TO YOUR FAMILY'S HOUSE AND ALL THAT, RIGHT?
I HEARD GOSSIP THAT YOU DON'T SHOW UP AT TENNIS AND YOU'RE MEETING UP WITH A WOMAN. IS IT TRUE?
OH, DID YOU?
I WAS WORRIED
.....
WHO?
CHIE SAMEJIMA-SEMPAI
SPEAKING OF WHICH
DID YOU KNOW CHIE-CHAN QUIT SCHOOL?

I'D STARTED MEETING UP WITH MIDORI KUNIYAMA AFTER WORK ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH.
WE ALWAYS MET UP AT NIGHT.
THERE'S A SUMMER FESTIVAL SOON.
THAT'S RIGHT.
HOW'D YOU LIKE THE MOVIE TODAY?
IT WAS INTERESTING.
AH... I REALLY LIKE WATCHING THEM ALONE TOO JUST FOR MYSELF.
SO I'M NOT GOOD AT EXPRESSING MY THOUGHTS AFTERWARD... I WORRY THAT I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN HOW WONDERFUL IT WAS.
HEHE YOU DON'T HAVE TO USE SUCH FORMAL SPEECH!
SEIJI, I SAW YOU CRYING A LITTLE ..
AH! YOU DID?!
YOUR EYES GET USED TO THE DARK AFTER A WHILE, RIGHT?
Wa
Wa
...
IT BOTHERS YOU THAT MUCH?
ALL RIGHT NEXT TIME, I'LL PRETEND NOT TO NOTICE
IT'S REALLY NOTHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT!
Seiji, you're so funny!
SO THERE'S A "NEXT TIME".

I REMEMBER
THE PAPER LANTERNS AT THE SUMMER FESTIVAL WERE SO BEAUTIFUL.
YOUR DAUGHTER, RIGHT?
I WANT TO DRESS HER IN A YUKATA THIS SUMMER FESTIVAL!
SHE'LL BE 2 PRETTY SOON
WELL, I HAVE TO PICK UP MY KID NOW, SO I GOTTA HURRY.
WAS IT EMBARRASSING SAYING THAT?
I HEARD YOU.
BUT IF YOU WANT ME TO FORGET ABOUT IT, I CAN.

WHAT'S WRONG,
SEIJI?
GRANDPA, I ONLY JUST TURNED 20
OH YEAH, DID YOU GET USED TO DRINKING ALCOHOL YET?
I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DAY I COULD DRINK WITH YOU!
IT'S BEST TO LIVE LIFE WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT PROS AND CONS I JUST FOCUS ON THE GOOD THINGS
grinning
IF IT'S JUST TALKING, I'D LOVE TO ANYTIME.
SO KEEP LIVING FOR A LONG TIME, OKAY?
OKAY, JUST ONE CUP THEN.
ANYWAY, SINCE YOUR DAD CAN'T DRINK...
thud
thud

TRY NOT TO WORRY YOUR MOTHER.
SHE'S ALREADY REALLY BUSY.
Since Grandma's like "that" and your dad's totally under her control...
Hehe
WHEN IT'S BETTER TO HAVE SOMETHING A LITTLE SALTY AND SPICY.
THERE ARE TIMES
WHEN SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS, YOU SHOULD JUST THINK OF IT AS A SNACK TO GO WITH SAKE.


I WON'T DIE UNTIL I SEE THE FACE OF MY GREAT GRANDCHILD.
DO YOU THINK SO...?
IT'S ALL RIGHT. WHEN YOU HAVE A WIFE BY YOUR SIDE ONE DAY, YOU'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE.
JUST LOOK AT ME! YOUR GRANDMA'S ALWAYS URGING ME ON.
HAHA!
DON'T LAUGH! IT'S IN YOUR GENES!
AH...
AND MY OUTLOOK TOO.
MY VALUES...
MADE MY WORLD LOOK SO SMALL,
GRANDPA'S LONG LIFE...

BUT...
HE TOOK MY HAND...
AND TAUGHT ME.

HAPPY THINGS...

SAD THINGS...

WHEN I ENTERED THAT NEW WORLD, I FOUND SO MANY THINGS.

FUN THINGS...

HARD THINGS...

EVERYTHING.

MEETING PEOPLE

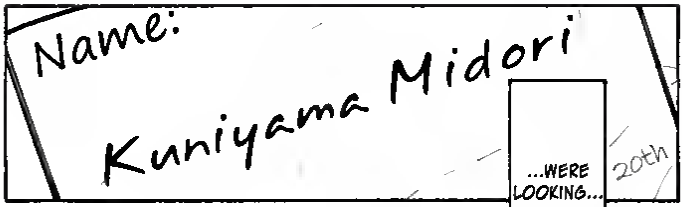
CHANGES OUR LIVES.

RUSTLE

Divorce papers

Date Year Month Day

YOU TOO...


Name:
Kuniyama Midori
...WERE LOOKING...
20th

FOR THAT.

HMM.
.....

SO...
THIS WAS YOUR WIFE'S HANDWRIT-ING?
I THINK SO. I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER TOO WELL

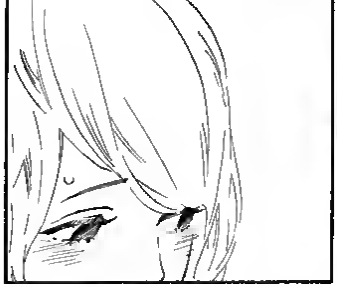
SO...
YOU SAID SHE'D GIVEN IT TO YOUR GRANDMA.
YOU'RE PRETTY CALM
I HAD NO IDEA THAT SHE'D BEEN TO MY FAMILY'S HOUSE
WHAT, ARE YOU SULKING?
EVERY WOMAN HAS ONE OR TWO SECRETS!
I DON'T LIKE WOMEN
IF POSSIBLE, I'D RATHER NOT THINK ABOUT IT
SO WHAD-DYA SAY?
GONNA JUST TEAR IT UP AND TOSS IT OUT?
OH, I SEE..
WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO TOSS OUT..
NO WAY!

...RATHER THAN THIS PAPER...
...IS HARU-CHAN?
Uh-oh!
Uh-oh!
Uh-oh!
Haha!
Uhhhh
ohhhh!
DON'T DO THAT!
YOU'RE LIKE A HYSTERICAL WOMAN!
YOU TALK A LOT OF CRAP, HUH?
Soak-ing wet

HUH?
FIGHT?
IT'S WORSE TO FIGHT
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS ABOUT, BUT...
IT'S NOT GOOD TO EAVES-DROP
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. HE'S ALWAYS LIKE THAT WITH ME!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?!
Iy-
kahaha!
YOU'RE A BAD MAN!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
IT'S MY WAY OF WORRYING ABOUT HIM!
HE'S REALLY INTERESTING TO WATCH, ISN'T HE?
I HEARD YOU'RE BAD WITH FIRE
THAT'S TRUE.
WHO THINK HIGHLY OF THEM-SELVES ARE ACTUALLY USELESS.
BUT MOST OF THE PEOPLE
WOMEN ARE SUCH A PAIN!
NO WAY

THAT BENTO,
I'D GIVE IT 60 POINTS OUT OF 100.
Y-
YOU'RE TERRIBLE!
The coloring certainly's a little off, but...
BUT SHE TRIES SO HARD!
YOU'RE TERRIBLE!
IT MIGHT MAKE SEIJI SICK, SO I'LL TAKE IT FOR YOU!
SHE'S CUTE!
Hahaha! It looks good! But what I really want to taste is you
I wasn't expecting him to eat it. That's absurd!
I just wanted him to see the progress I've made!
It went down!
YEAH, 40 POINTS.
Oh, senpai! Please be gentle!
I DON'T NEED YOUR ADVICE!
JUST GIVE UP! GIVE UP!
YOU CAN'T HANDLE THAT SORT OF MAN!
So hand it over!
No!
MY DAD'S FRIEND OWNS THIS COMPANY
Erk!
I USED MY CONNECTIONS TO GET SEIJI HIRED TOO, YOU KNOW!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY OF IT.
FIRE-USER..
YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO MY ADVICE TOO
THIS PLACE IS LIKE MY BACKYARD, Y'KNOW
STARE
WELL,
DESPITE THAT, HE'S HORRIBLE TO ME
TENSING UP

BUZZ
BUZZ
1
SEIJI-KUN OVER HERE!
CHIE-CHAN!
SORRY I'M LATE!
NOT AT ALL!
I'M SORRY TO CALL YOU AFTER WORK.
I WAS IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD,
SO I WON-DERED IF WE COULD TALK.
YEAH.
OH...
IF YOU'RE HERE WITH A FRIEND,
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE CALLED KAWABATA TOO.
YOU TWO ARE SO CLOSE!



I'M SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY.

HEHE.

I'M DOING STRANGE THINGS IT'S EMBARRASSING
I NEVER KNEW I WAS SUCH AN INFLEXIBLE PERSON
YOU'RE RIGHT
YOU'RE ALWAYS APOLOGIZING, HUH?
Ahaha!
I REALIZED I WAS SO RUDE I FEEL TERRIBLE
DON'T LAUGH!
HEHE
YOU MEAN AT THE SUPERMARKET?
OF YOU CHASING AFTER CABBAGE
I JUST CAN'T ERASE THE IMAGE
I'M SO SORRY!
YOU'RE LAUGHING TOO MUCH!
ERASE IT!
YOU DIDN'T LOOK SO HOT YOURSELF SEIJI-KUN!
REALLY?!
I JUST CAN'T!
I APOLOGIZED, DIDN'T I?!
WHY ARE YOU SO MEAN?!
I THINK OF YOU EVERY TIME I SEE CABBAGE
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
ERASE IT RIGHT NOW!
RIGHT NOW!
I CAN'T FORGET ABOUT IT.
I TOLD YOU, YOU DIDN'T LOOK ANY DIFFERENT, RIGHT?
I LIKE YOU, CHIE-CHAN!
WHETHER YOU'RE DRESSED UP OR NOT,

YOU'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO SHOW YOUR GOOD SIDE, RIGHT?
BUT YOU NEVER EXPECT PEOPLE TO REWARD YOU FOR IT.
SO MAYBE SOME PEOPLE DON'T NOTICE, BUT...
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO NOTICES ALL YOUR GOOD POINTS CHIE-CHAN.
RIGHT HERE NEXT TO YOU.
SEIJI-KUN, YOU'VE REALLY CHANGED

ISN'T IT BECAUSE OF HARU?
?
MAYBE HARU AND I...
ARE BOTH MATURING, TOGETHER.

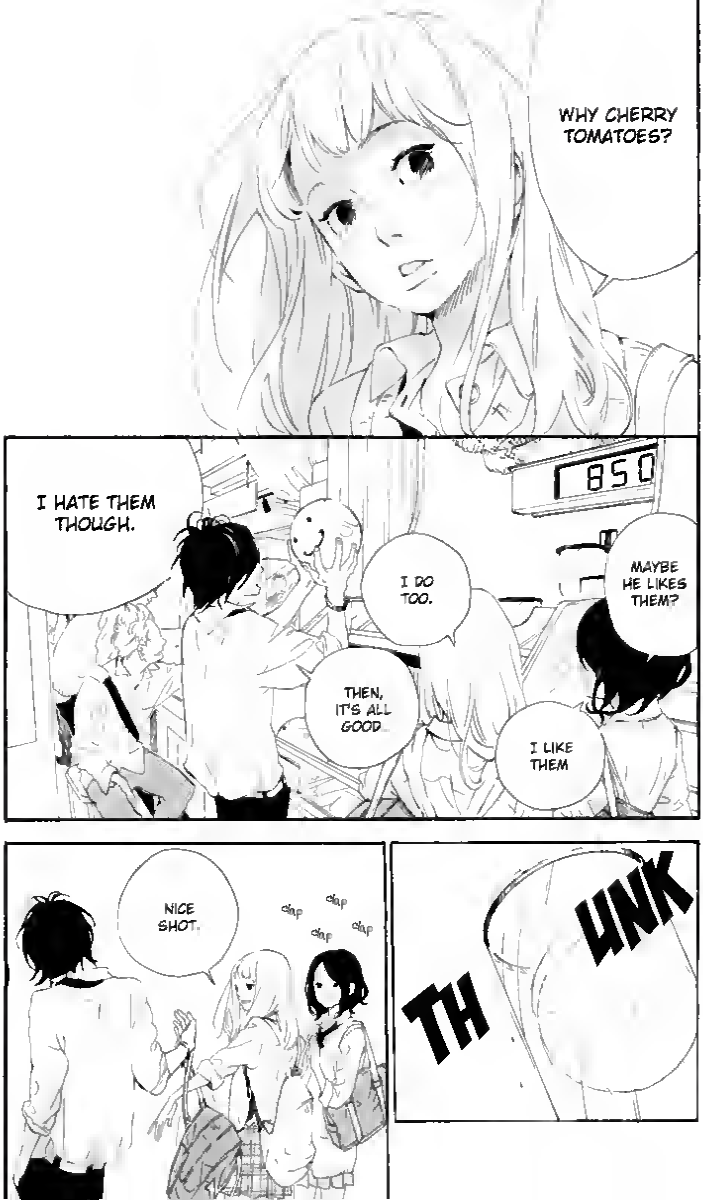
第8話

Ha
I'M HARU ISHIKAWA.
Ha Ha
AND THE SOUND OF SEIJI'S LAUGHTER.
LATELY, I WAKE UP TO THE NEIGHBORS' VOICES
OH, I SEE!
SO YOU NEED TO START WITH HEALTHY SOIL TO GROW A KITCHEN GARDEN. WELL, THAT WAS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK TOO
GUESS SOIL'S IMPORTANT FOR A HEALTHY GARDEN

THEY TALK ABOUT SPECIAL SALES,
THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD NEWS,
ECONOMIZING,
AND ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN.
MY DAUGHTER WILL BE IN HIGH SCHOOL IN THE SPRING

SEIJI BOUGHT A...

CHERRY TOMATO SEEDLING.


WHY CHERRY TOMATOES?
850
I HATE THEM THOUGH.
I DO TOO.
MAYBE HE LIKES THEM?
THEN, IT'S ALL GOOD
I LIKE THEM
NICE SHOT.
clap
clap
clap
clap
TH
UNK

WON IT.
WON'T IT BE EMBARRASSING CARRYING THAT HOME? IT'S HUGE!
WHAT? SO YOU'D RATHER HAVE THE LOLLI-POPS...?
Excuse me. Can I exchange this for the lollipops?
MAYBE HE WANTED TO GIVE IT TO YOU?

I LIKE STUFFED ANIMALS, YOU KNOW.
IF YOU WANT ONE,
YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO BEG ME FOR IT.
BONTA!
SCREW YOU AND YOUR PUPPY-DOG EYE-BROWS
I'M TAKING REAL GOOD CARE OF THE PLUSHY YOU GAVE ME FOR MY GRADUATION PRESENT.
OH, YEAH...? WELL, DON'T ACT LIKE YOU'RE SO SWEET.
OH! THAT'S RIGHT.
I'M NOT ACTING.

WHAT KIND OF GIFT WOULD MAKE GUYS HAPPY?
ANYTHING'S GOOD...
HE'LL BE HAPPY AS LONG AS YOU PUT LOVE INTO IT.

SO, WHO'S THIS ABOUT?
SEIJI'S BIRTHDAY IS COMING UP SOON, REMEMBER?
REMEMBER?
WAIT, YOU KNOW WHEN HIS BIRTHDAY IS, DON'T YOU?
WHY WOULD I?
DON'T MAKE ME SOUND CREEPY!

I'M SORRY!
WHY'RE YOU SORRY?
DOESN'T MEAN I KEEP TRACK OF ALL THE DATES.
STUPID.
WE USED TO TALK ABOUT BIRTHDAYS AND STUFF ALL THE TIME WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
CREEPY...?
BECAUSE YOU'RE MAD.
I'M NOT MAD.
YES, YOU ARE.
NO, I'M NOT.
YOU CALLED ME STUPID.
'CAUSE I HATE SEIJI.

BUT WHAT IS THIS?

I KNOW HE'S NOT SAYING IT TO ME,

BUT I FELT A BIT SHOCKED.

HARU, COME HELP.
ON IT!
BE CAREFUL.
scrape scrape
SO HE'S TRYING HARD,
HUH...?
Hikari
(No Subject)
Bonta-senpai can be mean sometimes, huh?
I feel sorry for Seiji-san
Especially when he's trying so hard
Menu

WHEN IT STARTS TO BEAR FRUIT, WE HAVE TO TRIM THE LEAVES TO KEEP THE FRUIT FROM GETTING COVERED
SAYS HERE THAT IT HAPPENS OFTEN WHEN THE WIND IS BLOWING.
NO NEED TO GIVE IT TOO MUCH WATER
SAYS HERE THAT THE FRUIT'S TASTIER WHEN IT LACKS WATER
CAN'T WAIT.
OH, OKAY
IT'S GOING TO RAIN TODAY, SO MAYBE WE SHOULD HOLD OFF ON WATERING IT.
LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

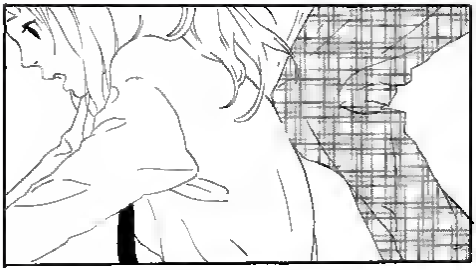
SOMEHOW, IT REMINDED ME OF MYSELF.
THE ACTUAL SEED.
CHERRY TOMATO SEEDLINGS RATHER THAN FROM
SEIJI CHOSE TO GROW
I WONDER WHAT I'LL GIVE HIM ON HIS BIRTHDAY.
YOU'RE MAKING ME CURI-OUS...
HEY, SEIJI?
YES?
NOTHING.
LIKE THIS?
He'll be happy as long as you put love into it.

DEFINITELY NOT THAT!!
ALL RIGHT WANNA HEAD OUT TOGETHER?
DON'T FORGET YOUR UMBRELLA.
OH, AND YOUR BENTO.
THIS YEAR, ARE WE JUST GONNA EAT CAKE...?
Morning.
Morning.
Good morning.
ARE THEY LIVING ALONE TOGETHER...?
SEEMS LIKE IT.

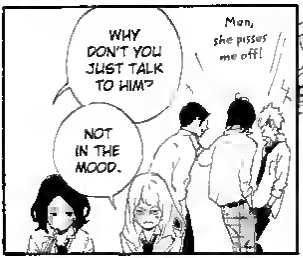
NEIGHBOR-
HOOD GOSSIP.
SOMETIMES, IT FEELS LIKE THEY'RE LAUGH-ING AT US.
BUT IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.
OH.
HARU, AN EARTH-WORM.
MUST'VE RAINED A LITTLE AT NIGHT.
OH, YEAH. SEIJI HATES BUGS.
WHEN I DIG AROUND IN THE SOIL,
ALL SORTS OF BUGS COME OUT,
LIKE ROLLY POLLIES
ROLLY POLLIES ARE CUTE.
WHEN WE WERE SMALL, BONTA AND I USED TO STUFF THEM IN PLASTIC BAGS
TO SEE WHO COULD CATCH THE MOST.
YOU AND BONTA-KUN PLAYED AROUND LIKE THAT?
HE SAID HE WOULDN'T PLAY WITH ME IF I COULDN'T DO BOY STUFF
BUT IT WAS FUN. WE PUT THEM BACK IN THE DIRT WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GO HOME.
SOME-TIMES, HE WOULD PLAY HOUSE WITH ME. HE'S SWEET, HUH?
I SEE.

IT'S MY HOBBY.
THEY SAY THAT AMATEURS SHOULD START WITH SEEDLINGS.
HOPE IT GOES WELL.
YOU HAVE FUN DIGGING IN THE DIRT, DON'T YOU?
BUT I'M NOT PLAYING HOUSE.
I KNOW IT'LL BE FINE.
WELL, I'M GOING LEFT.
AND YOU'RE GOING RIGHT.
Take care!
Take care!

THAT'S WHY
IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.



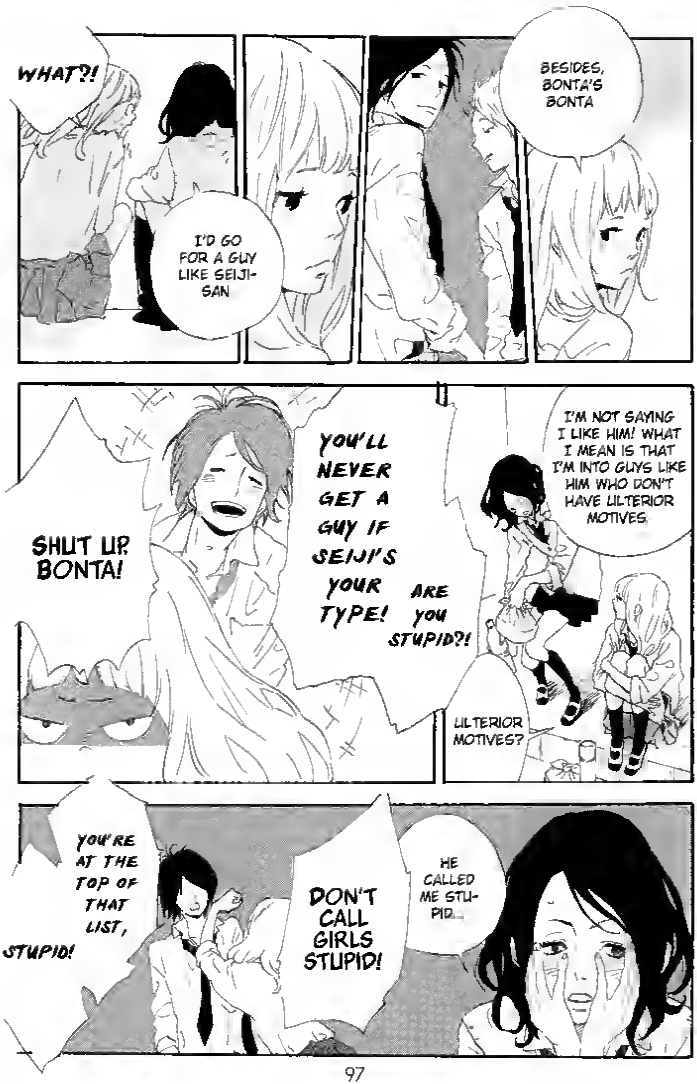
dinnng
daaang
dooong


WHY DON'T YOU JUST TALK TO HIM?
Man, she pisses me off!
NOT IN THE MOOD.

I'M STARVING!

SEIJI'S NOT EVEN IN THE PICTURE?
BONTA-SEMPAI'S OLDER.
SO IS SEIJI-SAN

HARU, ARE YOU INTO OLDER GUYS?
WHAT'RE TALKING ABOUT?


WHAT?!
I'D GO FOR A GUY LIKE SEIJI-SAN
BESIDES, BONTA'S BONTA
I'M NOT SAYING I LIKE HIM! WHAT I MEAN IS THAT I'M INTO GUYS LIKE HIM WHO DON'T HAVE LILTERIOR MOTIVES.
LILTERIOR MOTIVES?
YOU'LL NEVER GET A GUY IF SEIJI'S YOUR TYPE!
ARE YOU STUPID?!
SHUT UP, BONTA!
HE CALLED ME STUPID...
DON'T CALL GIRLS STUPID!
YOU'RE AT THE TOP OF THAT LIST, STUPID!

NEXT UP IS OUR FIELD TRIP.
OH, GOT IT, THANKS.
SEE YOU
OKAY
ICHI-KAWA.
YOSHI-DA.
YOU GUYS DON'T TALK ABOUT THAT STUFF?
.....
DO YOU KNOW IF SHE'S SEEING ANYBODY?
YEAH.
I SAW YOU GUYS OUTSIDE.
YOU ALWAYS EAT WITH HIKARI-CHAN?
I THOUGHT YOU'D TRY OUT FOR THE TEAM.
YOSHIDA, YOU'RE STILL PLAYING BASKETBALL, RIGHT?
HUH
WE DO, BUT THERE'S NOBODY SPECIFIC.

BONTA WAS PLAYING BASKETBALL.
I AM AREN'T YOU?
IF YOU DON'T GET IN NOW, YOU'LL BE LEFT BEHIND.
East Junior High
Komurasaki
AND I JOINED ONLY BECAUSE HE INVITED ME.
BUT...
IT LOOKS LIKE HE STOPPED WHEN HE GOT TO HIGH SCHOOL.
WASN'T THAT GIRL CUTE?
AVERAGE.
YOU GO AFTER HER.
NO WAY.
YOU GO.

BONTA, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORK TODAY?
NOPE.
I ONLY WORK 2-3 DAYS A WEEK.
LET ME UNDER YOUR UMBRELLA
WHERE DO YOU WORK?
THE KOMBINI IN FRONT OF THE STATION.
IF YOU COME, YOU'D BETTER BUY SOMETHING.
WANT ME TO HOLD IT?
NO, I GOT IT.

TOWA!

BUT I'M GETTING WET.
DON'T COME SO CLOSE.
THAT TOWA!
HE COULD'VE COME TO TALK.
AT THE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL...
EXCHANGED PHONE NUMBERS.
WE HAVEN'T SPOKEN SINCE WE
BIP
Towa Saejima
First Mail
How is Chie-san?
Menu
UH-OH.
I PRESSED "SEND".
WHAT'S THE POINT OF ASKING THAT?
BUT I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO TALK ABOUT.
MAYBE, AS THE OLDER PERSON, IT'S UP TO ME TO CONTACT HIM.

Towa Saejima
Re: First Mail
She's doing fine. (LOL)
How's Seiji-san?
And I'm sure you're doing well!
"Good timing! There's something I wanted to give you."
I WENT ON A FIELD TRIP THE OTHER DAY.
Okinawa
THIS FACE REMINDED ME OF YOU, SO I HAD TO BUY IT.
WHEN I TOLD MY MOM ABOUT IT,
SHE SAID THAT I SHOULDN'T TELL YOU THAT BECAUSE YOU'RE TEN TIMES...
CUTER.

RIGHT?
.....
BUT I THINK IT REALLY LOOKS LIKE YOU.
WE HAVEN'T MET IN A WHILE AND I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE HIM.
DID THE ONE I GIVE YOU DRY UP ALREADY?
IT'S NOT THAT EASY FINDING A CLOVER, IS IT?
UH-HUH, SURE

SEIJI-SAN WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND IT.
IT'D BE GOOD TO MAKE IT INTO A BOOK-MARK.
MY FRIEND TAUGHT ME THAT
CLOVERS' BLOSSOMS
THIS'LL BE MY FIRST SHOT.
I'M GLAD I BROUGHT THIS ALONG.
WAIT. DON'T PULL IT OUT YET, OKAY?
YEP.
THOSE ARE CLOVERS' BLOSSOMS?
HUH?
I thought they were white.

TOWA.
THANKS.
THE CLOVER THAT TOWA GAVE ME...
...WAS ONE THAT SEIJI HAD FOUND.
I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING.
SO THIS IS WHAT A HEART BEATING FAST SOUNDS LIKE.
THE EXCITEMENT CAUSED ME TO CLICK THE SHUTTER OF THE CAMERA.

I'M SO NERVOUS...
HELLO? ICHIKAWA RESIDENCE.
I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO GIVE SEIJI A GOOD TIME!
OF ALL PEOPLE, GREAT GRANDMA HAD TO PICK UP!
What do you want?
THIS IS HARU ICHIKA-WA...
UM...
Oh... You
SEIJI'S BIRTHDAY IS COMING SOON

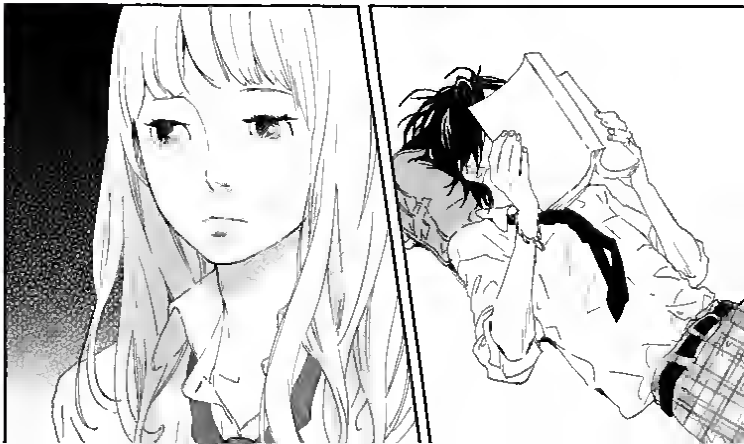
How can you ask me about that? We're still dealing with his grandfather's matters.
UH-OH.
I'M SORRY.
BUT-
I'm busy with the shop so I'm hanging up now.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO MEAN?
THE BUSINESS WITH HIS GRANDPA SHOULD BE EVEN MORE CAUSE TO THROW SEIJI A PARTY!
Seiji? Seiji?!
WELL, THAT IS HIS NAME!
WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE!
Be quiet!
You don't even care about how hard he's been working!
CLICK
GOOD-NESS.
Beep
Beep
Beep
GRR
IS THE SHOP REALLY THAT BUSY...?

A SOUVENIR FROM TOWA'S FIELD TRIP.
WHAT'S THIS?
AHHHHH!!
WHO WAS THAT JUST NOW?
I WASN'T ARGUING.
WHY WERE YOU ARGUING?
N-
NO ONE!
Ichikawa
BUT ALL THAT WAS...
YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR SPEAKING RUDELY TO HER.
WEREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK HIM TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MOM?
YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SEE MY GRANDPA, YOU KNOW?

I'VE BEEN TRYING HARD ALL ALONG.

SO THAT I WON'T CAUSE SEIJI ANY EMBARRASSMENT.

I'M TRYING MY BEST TOO,



I'M LEAVING TOO.
WHAT?!
HARU-CHAN, I'LL WALK YOU HOME.
BONTA, AREN'T YOU SLEEPING OVER AGAIN TODAY?
OH, REALLY?
BONTA...
I'M GOING HOME NOW.

BONTA. . YOU HAVEN'T GONE HOME?
SO WHAT?
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?
I GO HOME ONCE A WHILE. QUIT BUGGING.

'CAUSE I NEVER TOLD YOU.
BUT NOW YOU KNOW, RIGHT?
GOT IT?
OKAY, END OF STORY!
BUGGING?
I'M ASKING BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW!

CUT IT OUT, BONTA
WHAT...? ARE YOU GONNA CRY ABOUT IT?
FORGET HIM. LET'S GO, HARU-CHAN

BONTA'S A REALLY CLUMSY GUY.
HE'S FOUL-MOUTHED,
A BULLY,
AND UNABLE TO BE HONEST EVEN WHEN HE'S NICE.
HARU!

BONTA WALKED ME HOME...
YOU MADE ME WORRIED! YOU WERE GONE SO LONG!
THANKS...
IT'S ALREADY LATE.
WHY DON'T YOU ASK HIM TO STAY OVER?
OH
OKAY...
BEEN A WHILE SINCE I SAW HIM, BUT THAT GUY HASN'T CHANGED ONE BIT.
YOU MEAN SEIJI?
HE'S ALWAYS PUTTING UP A NICE FRONT AND I DON'T LIKE IT.

IS THAT YOUR ROOM?
SEIJI'S CLOTHES LOOK A BIT LOOSE ON BONTA.
YEP.
WELL, GOOD-NIGHT
GRAB
WH-
WHAT?!
I SAW SOME-THING ON TOP OF YOUR BED.
OH MY GOD!
DON'T LOOK!
I ALREADY SAW IT.

WHAT...?
YOU SLEEP WITH THE PLUSHY I GAVE YOU?
OH, MAN. SERIOUSLY...
HE'S MAKING FUN OF ME
YOU'RE PRETTY INTERESTING.
SEE?
LEMME TAKE A LOOK.
STOP IT!

I THOUGHT IT WAS CUTE
'NIGHT.
ktunk

NIGHT, BONTA-KUN

第9話

THE FIFTEEN YEAR OLD ME IS LAYING RIGHT OVER THERE.

I CAN HEAR SEIJI'S VOICE.
GOTTA GET UP.

HE LOOKS LIKE A ROLLY POLLY ...
BONTA TOO?
I COULDN'T REALLY SLEEP.
"I thought it was cute"
DOES BONTA LIKE ME?
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

I DON'T REALLY UNDER-STAND.
MORNING. BONTA!
FRIENDS DON'T KISS THEIR "FRIENDS", DO THEY?
BUT THEN...
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
MORNING...

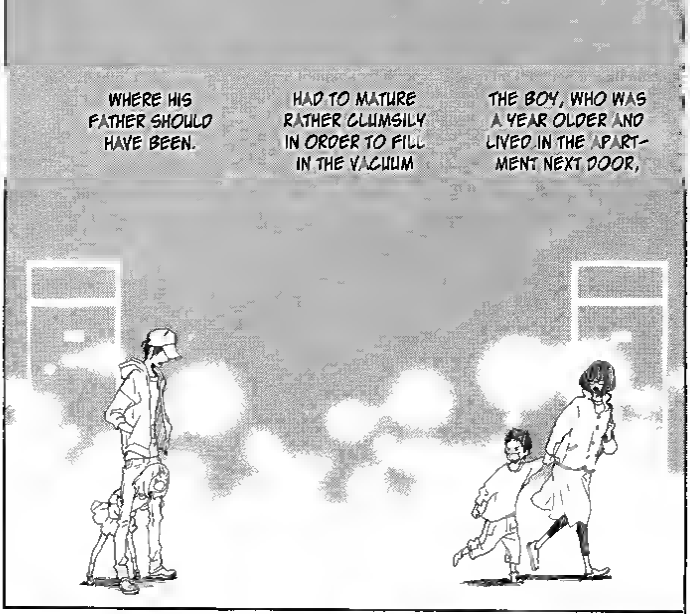
SEIJI'S MY DAD, BUT HE'S NOT MY DAD. SHOULD I THINK OF IT THAT WAY...?
WHAT DO YOU CALL A FRIEND WHO ISN'T A FRIEND...?
I DON'T WANT HIM TO DISAPPEAR FROM MY LIFE AGAIN...
HUH?!
WHY'D YOU COME TO SEE ME THAT DAY...?

NO...
SEIJI'S GRANDFATHER PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR.
YOU SAID YOU WERE WORRIED,
AND THAT IT WAS BECAUSE SEIJI SAID THAT HE LIKED ME OR SOMETHING.
WAS THAT REALLY ALL?
I KEPT THINKING ABOUT MY MOM BECAUSE OF THAT
BOTH ME AND SEIJI.
A BIG HOLE HAD OPENED MY HEART. IT WAS LIKE THAT WHEN MY MOM DIED TOO.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHO OR WHAT
HAD BURIED THAT HOLE.
BOTH ME
AND SEIJI
KNEW VERY WELL WHO IT WAS.

THAT'S WHY I WENT TO SEE YOU.
I WAS SO NER-VOUS!
BUT I'M GLAD I DID IT.
DUH! YOU CHOKED UP THE MOMENT YOU SAW ME!
BONTA...
BUT I'M A GONER.
UNLIKE YOU, I'M A REAL LOSER.
THAT'S HOW I WAS WHEN MY MOM DECIDED TO GET BACK WITH MY DAD!
SAY YOU WON'T DISAPPEAR AGAIN.

BUT... THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED.
IF THAT HAD BEEN THE END OF IT, I WOULDN'T CARE AS MUCH.
WHEN I HAD TO LEAVE SOMEONE WHO'D BEEN BESIDE ME ALL ALONG, IT MADE ME WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT I FELT FOR HER.
IS HE TALKING ABOUT ME?
THAT GOT ME THINKING...
AND ACTUALLY CAME TO SEE ME.
YOU KEPT ON MAILING ME.
MISSING SOMEONE SO BADLY...OR BEING HAPPY WHEN YOU SEE THEM... I WANNA FIND THOSE FEELINGS WITH YOU TOO.
JUST LIKE I IMAGINED... I LOVE YOU... I COULDN'T BELIEVE HOW LAME I SOUNDED TALKING TO YOU BECAUSE I WAS SO NERVOUS.

Swish
BUT...
THIS IS THE KIND OF GUY I AM.
GENTLE, BUT NOT HONEST?
YOU KNOW ME WELL.

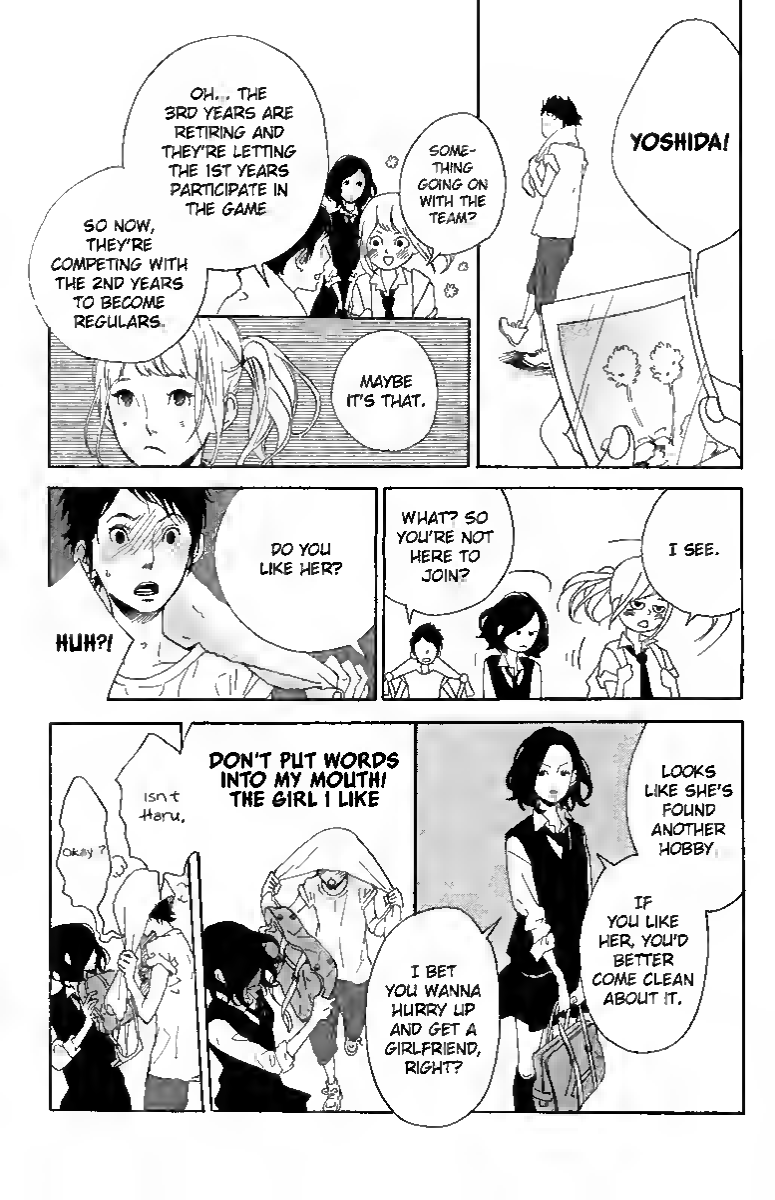

THE BOY, WHO WAS A YEAR OLDER AND LIVED IN THE APARTMENT NEXT DOOR,
HAD TO MATURE RATHER CLUMSILY IN ORDER TO FILL IN THE VACUUM
WHERE HIS FATHER SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

I WONDER WHAT HE'D LOOK LIKE IF REFLECTED IN MY EYES.
JUST SO YOU KNOW...
I'M JEALOUS OF SEIJI AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH HIM.
MAYBE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...
Then, turn this way.
No, you're pullin'.
You're stretchin' my hoodie.
I'm just holdin' onto it.

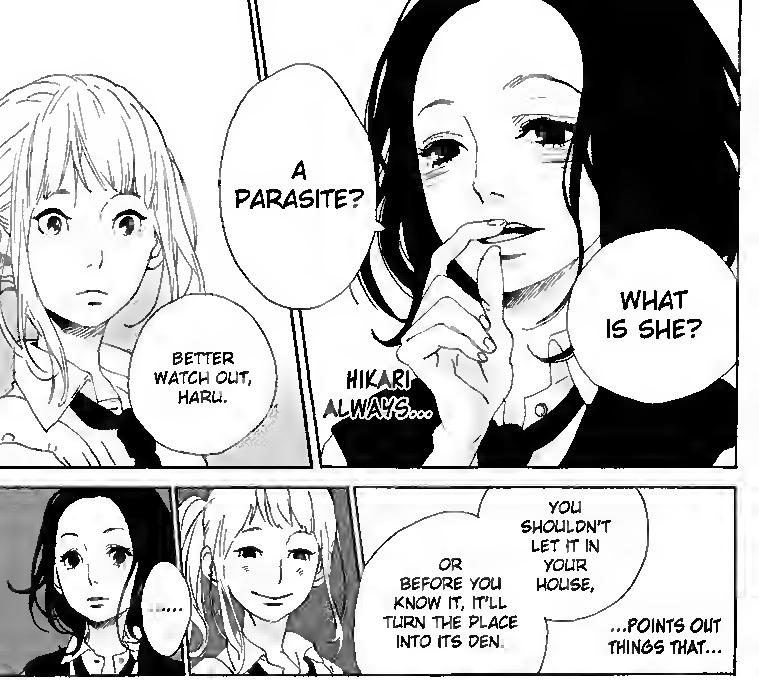
SOMEONE ELSE OWNED THIS HOUSE BEFORE US...
WHAT A PAIN...
PROBABLY NOT UNTIL SUMMER.
WHEN'LL IT START GROWING TOMATOES?
YEAH, NOT TOO INTEREST-ING, HUH? HAHA.
UH-HUH.
THE PREVIOUS OWNERS WERE IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING A GARDEN
SEE HOW THERE'S ONLY ONE TREE STANDING ALL ALONE OVER THERE?

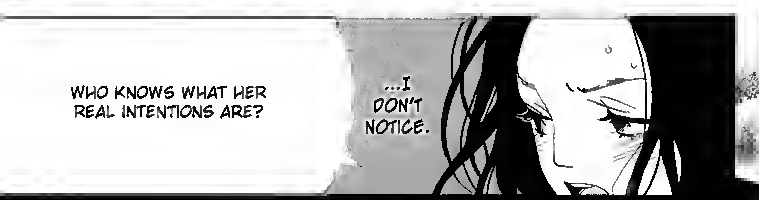
SORRY. FOR MAKING HARU FOLLOW ME AROUND.
AHA! I SPY A ROLLY POLLY!
YEAH, AND? I'M NOT GONNA PLAY WITH IT WITH YOU...
BOTH HARU AND YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED. YOU'RE A BIG KID, SAME AS ALWAYS.
ARE YOUR HANDS SHAKING?
BONTA.
THE WALLS HAVE EARS AND SHOJI SCREEN DOORS HAVE EYES.
YOU WERE LISTENING, WEREN'T YOU?!

AH...
WHAT IS THIS FEELING?
EACH DAY SENDS MY HEART RACING.
YOU TOOK A PICTURE
HEY, IT'S A NICE SHOT!
REALLY? I'M GLAD!
DUNNO. AREN'T THEY FROM THE PHOTO CLUB?
WHAT ARE THEY UP TO...?


YOSHIDA!
SOMETHING GOING ON WITH THE TEAM?
OH... THE 3RD YEARS ARE RETIRING AND THEY'RE LETTING THE 1ST YEARS PARTICIPATE IN THE GAME
SO NOW, THEY'RE COMPETING WITH THE 2ND YEARS TO BECOME REGULARS.
MAYBE IT'S THAT.
I SEE.
WHAT? SO YOU'RE NOT HERE TO JOIN?
DO YOU LIKE HER?
HUH?!
LOOKS LIKE SHE'S FOUND ANOTHER HOBBY.
IF YOU LIKE HER, YOU'D BETTER COME CLEAN ABOUT IT.
I BET YOU WANNA HURRY UP AND GET A GIRLFRIEND, RIGHT?
DON'T PUT WORDS INTO MY MOUTH! THE GIRL I LIKE
isn't Haru,
Okay?

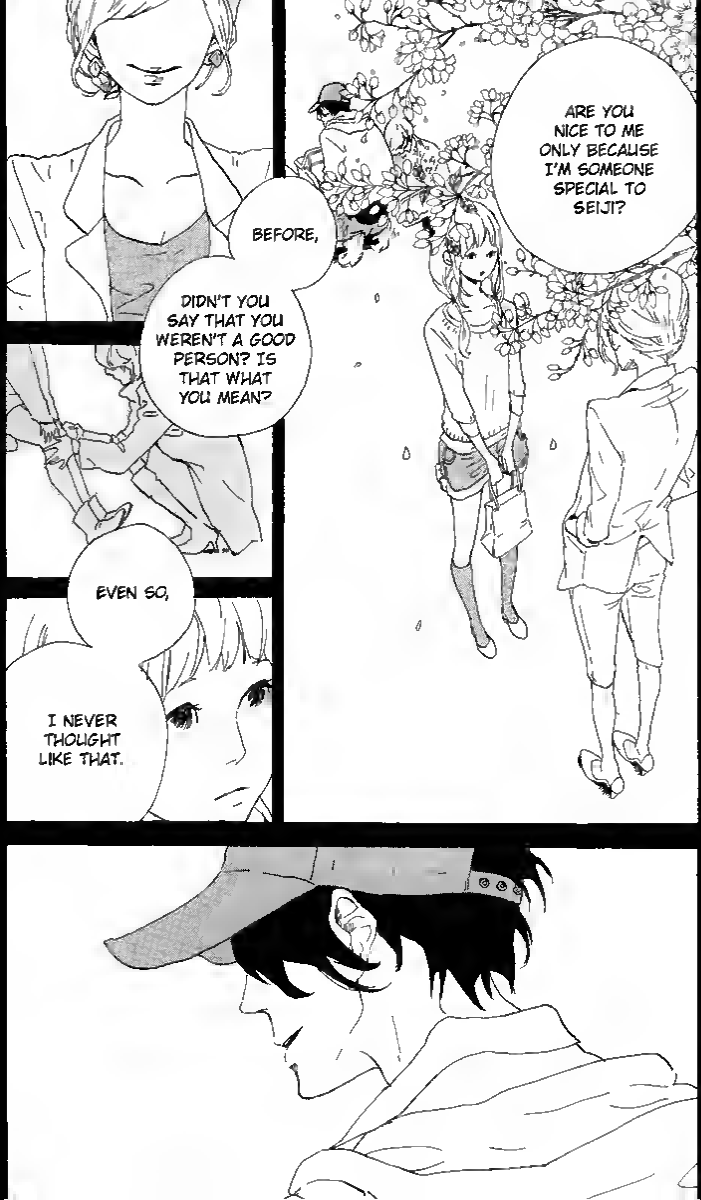
CAN I STOP BY THE SUPER-MARKET?
SURE.
THE BUGS HAD A FEAST WITH THESE VEGGIES.
THAT'S PROOF THAT IT TASTED GOOD
YOU'RE RIGHT!
Then, I'll buy it!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY? YOU'RE SO WEIRD, HARU.
I THOUGHT OF SOME-THING THAT MADE ME LAUGH.
Hehe.
SEIJI HAS A FRIEND WHO CALLS HERSELF A PEOPLE-PLEASER
SHE'S PRETTY ON THE INSIDE, JUST LIKE A CABBAGE AFTER YOU PEEL THE OUTER LEAVES.
OH, BUT SHE'S PRETTY ON THE OUTSIDE TOO.
WHEN SHE CAME OVER TO OUR HOUSE ONE TIME,
SHE GAVE ME A PROTECTIVE CHARM.





I'VE ALREADY ASKED CHIE-SAN ABOUT.

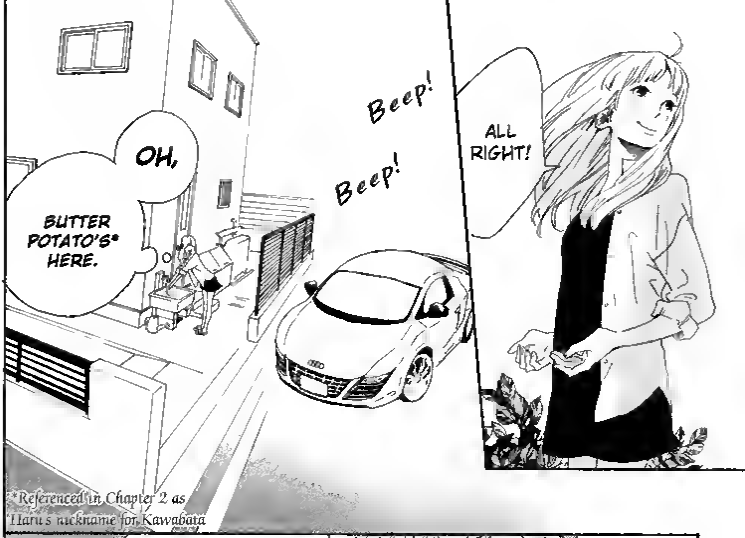
BUT THAT'S SOMETHING...


ARE YOU NICE TO ME ONLY BECAUSE I'M SOMEONE SPECIAL TO SEIJI?
BEFORE,
DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT YOU WEREN'T A GOOD PERSON? IS THAT WHAT YOU MEAN?
EVEN SO,
I NEVER THOUGHT LIKE THAT.

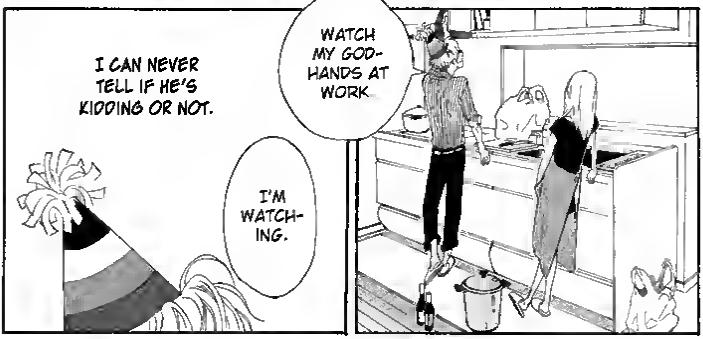
SURE, I DID HAVE FEELINGS FOR SEIJI.
BUT THAT WAS IN THE PAST AND HE ALREADY TURNED ME DOWN.
AND HE HAD SOMEONE ELSE.
STILL, I'M HAPPY NOW.
"Towa picked up in that
It's annoying when his instincts are so sharp"
I WENT ON A FIELD TRIP THE OTHER DAY.
THIS FACE REMINDED OF YOU. SO I HAD TO BUY IT.
WHEN I TOLD MY MOM ABOUT IT..

she said "Haru-chan's ten times cuter"
OKAY, THEN.
I'LL TRY NOT TO GET BACK TOO LATE.
HAVE A SAFE TRIP!
I'M GLAD IT'S SUNNY OUT.

BECAUSE I USED TO GO WITH HIM A LONG TIME AGO.
I KNOW.
SEIJI IS GOING TO SEE MOM ON HIS BIRTHDAY.
SWOOSH
NOW, IT'S DECIDED THAT WE WOULD GO WHENEVER WE FELT LIKE IT.
QUIT CRAWLING ON THE LEAVES OF MY CHERRY TOMATOES!
HEY!
YOU BELONG HERE!



*Referenced in Chapter 2 as Haru's nickname for Kawabata



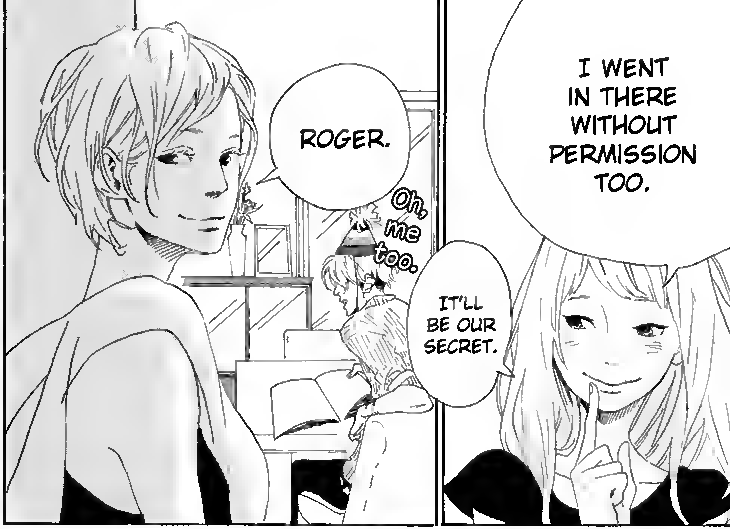
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS
NEXT UP IS ME
WHEN YOU MEET A BOY, SEIJI SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO KNOW
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT OF QUESTIONING HIM
OVER WHY HE'S FRIENDS WITH SEIJI.
HURRY UP AND FIND A GIRLFRIEND.
DON'T STARE AT ME SO HARD.
Tokkyu
WHAT A STRANGE GUY. HEHE...
Smells good!

KAWABATA-SAN, I LOVE YOU!
YEAH, IT'LL BE DONE IN TIME.
YOU WANT TO?
What?
HEY, IS IT TOO LATE TO BAKE A CAKE?
Marukyu Sweets at home

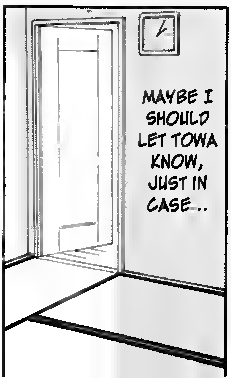
I'M GONNA CALL SOME BACK-UP.
Ding Dong...

HARU-CHAN, LONG TIME NO SEE! THERE'S NO TIME, SO LET'S GET GOING.
CAN I COME IN?
SURE...
SHE RUSHED OVER HERE.
CHIE-SAN IS NOT WEARING ANY MAKEUP.

OH.
HERE.
CUTE.
THANKS.
IS THAT A ZUCCHINI, TOMATO, AND GREEN ONION?
I MADE THOSE...
...IN MY HOME EC CLASS IN ELEMENTARY.
THE FELT WAS PEELING OFF AFTER I WASHED IT,
SO SEIJI SEWED IT FOR ME...
MIND IF I USE THE KITCHEN...?
THAT'S SEIJI'S TERRITORY.


ROGER.
Oh, me too.
IT'LL BE OUR SECRET.
I WENT IN THERE WITHOUT PERMISSION TOO.

THIS'LL DEFINITELY MAKE SEIJI HAPPY.
SPONGE
Healthy and Delicious.
Have it with your favorite veggies.


MAYBE I SHOULD LET TOWA KNOW, JUST IN CASE...

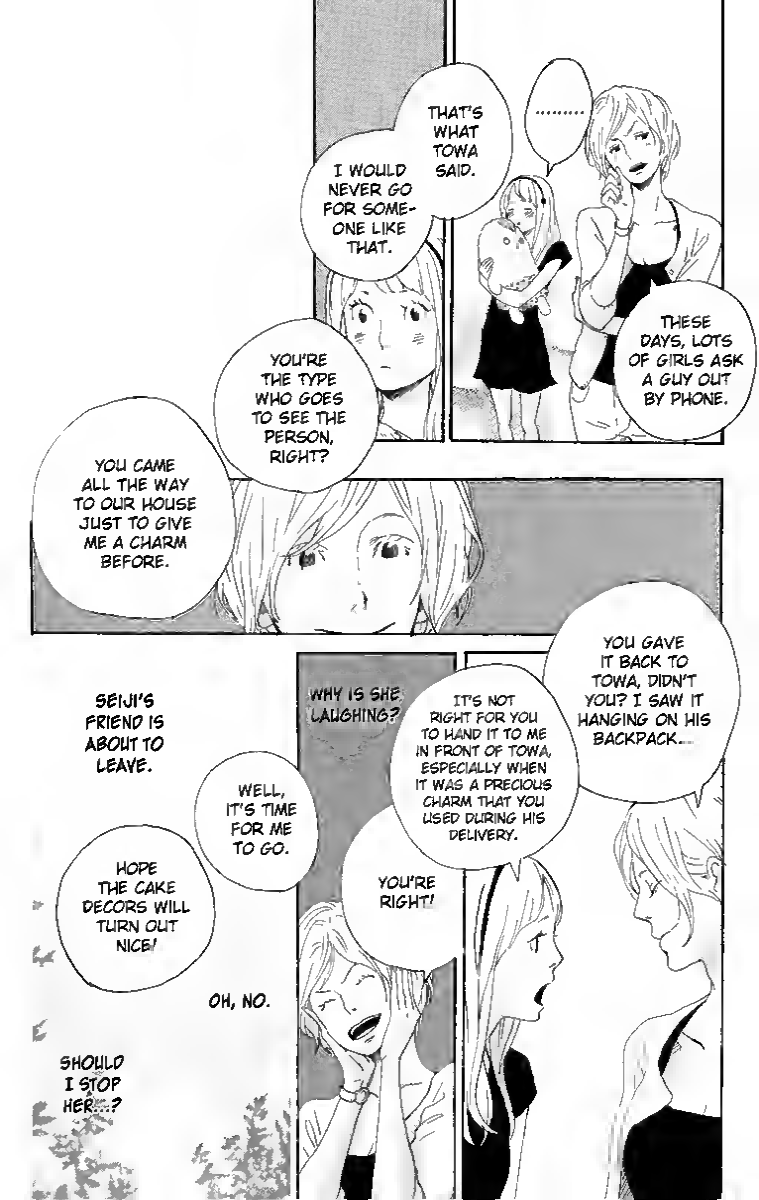
I WON'T FORCE AN INVITATION,
BUT I HOPE SHE'LL STAY EVEN WHEN SEIJI COMES HOME.

What should I tell him ?
HARU-CHAN!
CAN YOU KEEP ME COMPANY WHILE THE SPONGE COOLS DOWN?

*T/N: A traditional Ryukyuan decoration often in pairs, resembling a cross between a lion and a dog from Okinawan mythology
LOOK LIKE A SHISA.*
TOWA SAID THAT I...
YOU'LL LOOK CUTE WITH ANYTHING BECAUSE YOU HAVE SUCH NICE FEATURES.
THAT KID!! I TOLD HIM NOT TO SAY THAT.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S TOLD ME THAT, CHIE-SAN.
.....

A PARASITE...
A PERSON WHO THINKS ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE
I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CALL
BUT I DON'T THINK HE REALLY MEANS IT IN A BAD WAY. HE NEVER REALLY SAYS WHAT'S ON HIS MIND.
TOWA'S A BIT STRANGE, ISN'T HE? I SORT OF GRAVITATE TOWARD STRANGE PEOPLE.
I HAVE LOTS OF ODD FRIENDS TOO.
AND WHEN I FALL IN LOVE, I CONCENTRATE ON THAT PERSON 24/7.

HARU-CHAN, WHAT TYPE OF PERSON DO YOU LIKE?
IS SHE TALKING ABOUT SEIJI?
THEY SAY GIRLS MATURE FASTER THAN BOYS, RIGHT?
NO, IT'S ABOUT ME...
COME TO THINK OF IT, HAVING MY FIRST CRUSH AND DATING HAPPENED PRETTY FAST FOR ME...
I WONDER WHY I DIDN'T TAKE MY TIME WITH LOVE.
IT WAS WRONG FOR ME TO THINK THAT I COULD BETRAY SOME-ONE BECAUSE I FELT ENTITLED TO SOMETHING.
YOU MIGHT NOT UNDER-STAND WHAT I'M TELLING YOU YET.
JUST DON'T CHEAT, OKAY?
BUT LOVING SOMEONE IS FREE OF CHARGE, SO FALL IN LOVE AS MANY TIMES AS YOU CAN.
I... LIKE PEOPLE WHO WORK HARD...
THAT'S GREAT!!


.....
THESE DAYS, LOTS OF GIRLS ASK A GUY OUT BY PHONE.
THAT'S WHAT TOWA SAID.
I WOULD NEVER GO FOR SOMEONE LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE THE TYPE WHO GOES TO SEE THE PERSON, RIGHT?
YOU CAME ALL THE WAY TO OUR HOUSE JUST TO GIVE ME A CHARM BEFORE.
YOU GAVE IT BACK TO TOWA, DIDN'T YOU? I SAW IT HANGING ON HIS BACKPACK...
WHY IS SHE LAUGHING?
IT'S NOT RIGHT FOR YOU TO HAND IT TO ME IN FRONT OF TOWA, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT WAS A PRECIOUS CHARM THAT YOU USED DURING HIS DELIVERY.
YOU'RE RIGHT!
SEIJI'S FRIEND IS ABOUT TO LEAVE.
WELL, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO.
HOPE THE CAKE DECORS WILL TURN OUT NICE!
OH, NO.
SHOULD I STOP HER...?

WHAT WOULD SEIJI WANT?
HARU-CHAN, MIND GIVING ME A LITTLE PUSH?
WHEEZE
OOPH!
OO-
-PH!
WATCH YOUR STEP.
PUSH
CHIE-SAN WAS LAUGHING THE WHOLE TIME.

Okay.(^v^)v
Oh, the Okinawan sweets you gave me! I crushed them to sprinkle over the cake.♪ Thanks!!

Towa Saejima

Too bad my mom came back home!! Well, tell him happy birthday for both her and me.

I'M HOME.
WANT TO SEE SEIJI...?
DID CHIE-SAN NOT
I'M 100% SURE IT'S GONNA BE YUMMY!!
I MADE A CAKE WITH OKINAWAN SWEETS.
WOW! I WANNA SEE.
SEIJI, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

EVERY YEAR, I LOOK FORWARD TO WHAT YOU'RE GONNA MAKE FOR ME.
SEIJI BIRTH HAPPY DAY
WOW!
DON'T LOOK OVER THERE!
OF COURSE...
WE'LL HELP EACH OTHER CLEAN UP TOMORROW.

WAIT, THE PRESENTS COME FIRST!
HEY! LET'S WATCH A MOVIE. I RENTED A WHOLE BUNCH.
ON ONE OF MY BIRTHDAYS...
A LONG TIME AGO, I TOLD SEIJI THIS.
AND HE TIED UP MY HAIR CLUMSILY.
...HE DRESESD ME UP IN CUTE CLOTHES...
GOOD GIRL.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
LET'S GO SEE HER.
ON OUR BIRTHDAYS, WE'LL DRESS MAMA UP TOO.

WE'D GO AND REPORT TO HER, SAYING,

THAT'S WHAT I SAID.

"TODAY, I'LL BE SUCH-AND-SUCH AGE."

AND EVEN THOUGH I WAS ONLY A KID,

SEIJI KEPT HIS WORD.

I THINK THAT...

"I'M WATCHING YOU."

"I KNOW."

I'M NOW ABLE TO HEAR MAMA'S VOICE.

WHAT DID YOU TALK TO MOM ABOUT TODAY?
TODAY, HUH? WELL, THAT I'VE BECOME ANOTHER YEAR OLDER AND ABOUT YOU GOING TO HIGH SCHOOL.
OH, AND ABOUT GROWING CHERRY TOMATOES.
AND THAT YOU'VE MADE A FUN FRIEND.

YOU'RE WEARING MAKEUP...?
YEAH.
THAT REMINDS ME, SOMEONE LEFT THIS AT THE ENTRANCE.
IN MY HOMETOWN, YOU'RE GIVEN RED BEAN RICE ON YOUR BIRTHDAY.
How can you ask me about that?"
We're still dealing with his grandfather's matters
SHE MUST REALLY LOVE YOU.
GRANDPA ALWAYS COMES FIRST, SO THIS IS UNTHINKABLE.
WONDER WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME I HAD HOME-MADE RED BEAN RICE...

WITHIN THEMSELVES?
LOOK FOR COMPASSION...
DOES LOSS MAKE PEOPLE
I APPRECIATE IT.
THANKS.
SEIJI, HERE'S MY PRESENT.
GIVING ME THIS MAKES ME WANT TO CRY.
BUT WHY ARE YOU THE ONE CRYING...?
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT
UNTIL IT'S GONE
SEIJI,

HEY, SEIJI? ABOUT THOSE CHERRY TOMATO SEEDLINGS? WE'LL HAVE LOTS OF FRUIT FROM IT SOON, RIGHT? HOW YOU'RE GROWING THEM FROM SEEDLINGS MAKES ME THINK ABOUT HOW I'M LIKE A CHERRY TOMATO.

I'M GETTING ENERGY FROM THE SUN'S SMILES,
GROWING BIGGER FROM THE RAIN'S TEARS,
AND BEING AWAKENED BY THE WIND'S VOICE.
WHEN YOU THINK OF IT THAT WAY, IT SOUNDS
WONDERFUL, DOESN'T IT?

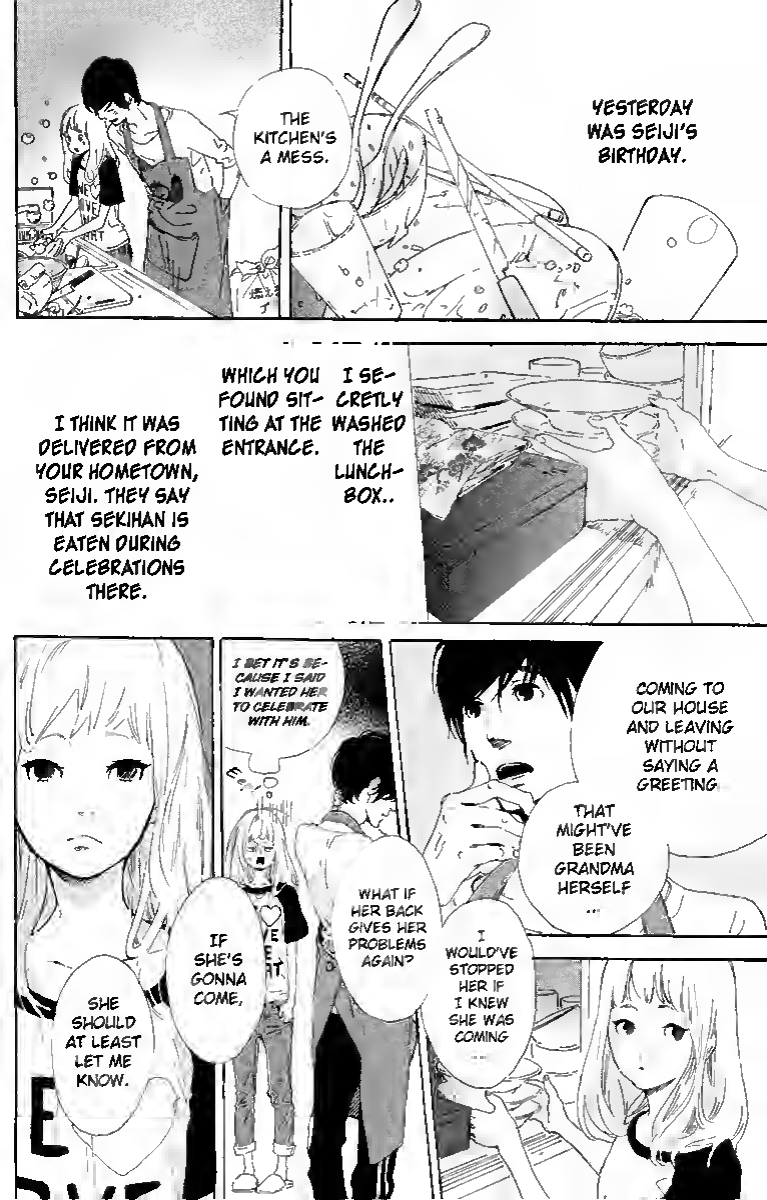
YOU'RE HERE FOR ME RAIN OR SHINE, AND THAT'S WHY I CAN'T THINK OF YOU AS ANYTHING LESS THAN A FATHER.

THANKS FOR BEING LIKE A MOM FOR ME IN MOM'S PLACE,
DAD!

第10話

"Happy Birthday
Today Haru you get to be a princess"
"So you can have whatever you want"
WHEN MAMA FELL INTO A DEEP SLEEP...
...I WAS STILL A SMALL CHILD.

"Suji don't cry"
EVERYTHING I WANTED WOULD GET BROKEN AND COULD NO LONGER BE USED.
AND THEN I REALIZED THAT THEY WERE ALL THINGS THAT I ENDED UP LOSING.


YESTERDAY WAS SEIJI'S BIRTHDAY.
THE KITCHEN'S A MESS.
I SECRETLY WASHED THE LUNCHBOX..
WHICH YOU FOUND SITTING AT THE ENTRANCE.
I THINK IT WAS DELIVERED FROM YOUR HOMETOWN, SEIJI. THEY SAY THAT SEKIHAN IS EATEN DURING CELEBRATIONS THERE.
COMING TO OUR HOUSE AND LEAVING WITHOUT SAYING A GREETING
THAT MIGHT'VE BEEN GRANDMA HERSELF ...
I BET IT'S BECAUSE I SAID I WANTED HER TO CELEBRATE WITH HIM.
WHAT IF HER BACK GIVES HER PROBLEMS AGAIN?
I WOULD'VE STOPPED HER IF I KNEW SHE WAS COMING ...
IF SHE'S GONNA COME,
SHE SHOULD AT LEAST LET ME KNOW.

I'D BE HAPPY WITH...
A PHONE CALL OR EVEN A LETTER...
HERE.
IS HE TALKING ABOUT...
THE LETTER I GAVE HIM AS A PRESENT...?
*T/N: Kimpira is finely chopped cooked vegetable.
HEY, I MADE *KIMPIRA OUT OF THE LEFTOVER CARROTS, SO EAT UP
OH, YEAH AND LET ME USE YOUR GARDEN FOR A BIT.
I NEED TO WASH MY CAR
OKAY
SURE
rustle
rustle
OH, YEAH THERE'S LEFTOVER CURRY, RIGHT?
I'M TAKING MY POT HOME, SO PACK IT IN TUPPERWARE
SO YOU CARRY AROUND YOUR OWN POT?
SAMEJIMA
THAT'S 'CAUSE YOUR POT'S TOO SMALL.
REALLY?
AFTER MAMA PASSED AWAY,
SEIJI AND I LIVED TOGETHER.

LAST SUMMER,
SEIJI'S GRANDFATHER PASSED AWAY.
THAT WAS WHEN I GOT TO MEET HIS FAMILY FOR THE FIRST TIME.
I SAW HIM CRY.
I WILL NEVER... FORGET THOSE TEARS.
THESE TEN YEARS SPENT WITH SEIJI...
SHOULD I REALLY...
SUM UP ALL THOSE YEARS BY CALLING HIM "SEIJI"?
KAWABATA-SAN, THANKS FOR YESTERDAY.
SURE, SURE.
OH, YEAH. DID YOU THANK CHIE-SAN?
DON'T FORGET TO TELL HER THAT BECAUSE OF HER BAKING THAT FLUFFY SPONGE, YOU WERE ABLE TO PUT BEAUTIFUL DECORATIONS ON IT.

I'M OFF.
Dad!
Haru.

"Sure I did have feelings for Seiji but"

I WANT TO BECOME...
SOMEONE WHO WILL BE OKAY EVEN WHEN SEIJI'S GOT HIS BACK TURNED.

!
TOWA.
IT'S NOT LIKE SHE'LL BE IN TROUBLE IF YOU KEPT IT A WHILE LONGER.
YOU DIDN'T NEED TO DO THAT.
I'M GIVING YOU BACK YOUR MOM'S CAKE KNIFE
THANKS FOR THIS.
.....
BUT SHE LEFT IN A HURRY...
SHE PROBABLY HAD FUN SINCE SHE DIDN'T GET TO DO IT FOR A WHILE.
MOM DOESN'T REALLY BAKE SWEETS ANYMORE.
YEAH.
YOU THINK SO?
WHAT?
SO TOWA'S STUDYING FOR HIS TESTS TOO?
REMINDS ME OF WHAT I WENT THROUGH LAST YEAR.

YES, MA'AM.
IT'S DANGEROUS SO BE CAREFUL.
OH
YOU SHOULD PUT THAT KNIFE AWAY IN YOUR BAG.
OH...
UM, TOWA?
OH, CRAP. YOU SAW IT.
THAT'S CHIE-SAN'S CHARM.
OLDER SISTER...?
YOU ACT LIKE AN OLDER SISTER.
YOU STUDIED HARD, DIDN'T YOU?
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
I WAS ABLE TO GRADUATE BECAUSE OF HER PASS.
IT'S LIKE WE'RE PASSING A BATON
THAT WAS WHEN I FIRST MET CHIE-SAN TOO.
COME TO THINK OF IT,
I WONDER WHY I DISLIKED HIM SO MUCH...
WE'VE MANAGED TO HAVE A LONGER CONVERSATION...
IF WE COMPARE THIS TO OUR FIRST TALK,

YOU COULD'VE GONE HOME WITHOUT ME.
YES!
WELL, YOU WERE STUDYING SO HARD, SO I FELT LIKE I SHOULD AT LEAST TREAT YOU TO SOME SNACKS.
BUT NEXT TIME, OKAY?
I GO TO THAT CRAM SCHOOL IN FRONT OF THE STATION OVER THERE.
CAN'T FUMBLE AWAY SUCH AN IMPORTANT "BATON".
OH, I SEE...
I SEE.
THE LAST TIME WE MET HERE...
SO YOU GO TO CRAM SCHOOL...
...IT WAS A RAINY DAY.
YOUR BOYFRIEND WORKS AT THE KOMBINI OVER THERE, DOESN'T HE?
WH-
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
HUH? I STOP BY THERE ON MY WAY HOME SOMETIMES AND I'VE SEEN HIM THERE
What, did I say something wrong?

NO MATTER WHERE WE GO, IT'S ALWAYS A PARTY...
I'M USED TO IT... AND SINCE MY MOM MAKES FRIENDS EASILY,
'COURSE, BUT I'M FINE WITH IT...
IT MUST BE HARD FOR YOU, AND GIVE YOU BAD MEMORIES, WHEN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE ALL THE TIME, HUH?
BUT YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU'RE SHY
WOW, SO YOU HAVE THAT KIND OF FRIEND? WE MOVED AROUND A LOT, SO THAT MAKES ME A LITTLE JEALOUS...
HE'S MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, OKAY?
MOTOR-MOUTH...
HE MUST KNOW HIS MOM WELL.
HE JUST LETS IT ALL OUT.
HAS SOMETHING TO SAY,
WHEN TOWA...
WELL, SHE JUST LOVES TO TALK.
OH, I DON'T MEAN IT IN A WEIRD WAY, OKAY?
I DON'T DISLIKE CHIE-SAN OR ANYTHING.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, OKAY?
UM...
GUESS HE'S THE TYPE THAT READS IN-BETWEEN THE LINES...
TOWA NEVER REALLY SAYS WHAT'S ON HIS MIND, BUT...
I KNOW THAT CHIE-SAN SAID THAT...

I LIKE SEIJI-SAN.
JUST BECAUSE.
ALSO 'CAUSE HE'S NICE.
I FEEL LIKE I'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE.
I WON-DER IF... TOWA IS BOTHERED ABOUT SEIJI TOO.
HUH? REALLY?
WELL, SEE YOU LATER.
YEAH, LATER.
"She's pretty isn't she?"
"Your dad's a nice guy isn't he?"

I KNOW THEY'RE JUST FRIENDS BROUGHT TOGETHER BY PARENT-HOOD,

BUT I CAN'T HELP BEING SOMEWHAT CONCERNED OVER CHIE-SAN.

IF SHE SAYS SHE LOVES HIM, I WON'T FEEL BAD OVER IT.

Bye bye!
Bye bye!
OH.
IT'S BONTA.
OH.
HARU
IT'S...
GONNA BE BORN IN THE SUMMER.
BONTA'S MOM... WILL BE HAVING A BABY SOON.
WILL YOU LET ME HOLD HIM?
I WON'T LET YOU IF YOU ARE BAD AT IT,
SO YOU'D BETTER PRAC-TICE...
HOW DO I PRAC-TICE?
JUST TRY WITH THAT WEIRD PLUSHY I GAVE YOU.
I BET HE'S MAKING FUN OF ME.
Pfft!
Yep.
Bunny?

AND THEN YOU JUST HAVE TO TELL HIM HOW CUTE HE IS, RIGHT?
YOU JUST GOTTA HUG HIM LIKE THIS.
LIKE THIS?
NO, LIKE THIS
...O-
OKAY.
JUST WAIT THERE.
YEAH.
BONTA. LET'S WALK HOME TOGETHER!
YOU NEED TO TELL HIM THAT YOU WANT TO WALK HOME TOGETHER.
BONTA-SENPAI'S GOTTEN A LOT NICER.
REALLY?
...OKAY
SO COME VISIT SOME TIME.
I... ACTUALLY HAVE TO GO HOME,

I CHASED AFTER BONTA AND GOT INTO THE SAME HIGH SCHOOL AS HIM.
THAT'S BECAUSE HE WON'T CHASE AFTER ME.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.
CAN YOU WAIT UNTIL I GET OFF WORK...?
WHY?
I WONDER IF HE WANTS TO TELL ME SOMETHING?
Don't leave, Okay?
YEAH, IT'S COOL...
I'LL WALK YOU HOME!
IT'S COOL, RIGHT?

Bank A
HUH...?
CHIE-SAN!
HARU-CHAN,
THIS IS MY FIRST TIME SEEING YOU IN YOUR SCHOOL UNIFORM. LOOKS GOOD ON YOU.
R-REALLY?
WELCOME.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT...
IT'S OKAY, I'M WAITING FOR SOME-ONE, SO I'M JUST KILLING TIME RIGHT NOW.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TAKE YOU HOME? IT'S RAINING ANYWAY
YOU'D KNOW SHE WAS PRETTY... EVEN WITH JUST HER BACK VIEW.
I WAS JUST ON MY WAY TO PICK UP TOWA FROM CRAM SCHOOL.
IT'S STILL NOT OVER YET.
THIS MONTH'S ISSUE HAS A BONUS GIFT ATTACHED, SO I CAN'T BROWSE THROUGH IT, HUH? GUESS I'LL HAVE TO BUY IT NOW
WHAT?!
HUH?
Peek
SHE REALLY STANDS OUT.
Glance
Glance

OH, HE DOES?
THAT BOY LOVES HIS CHOCOLATES.
OH AND I SHOULD GRAB CHOCOLATES FOR TOWA.
CHIE-SAN READS SHOUJO MANGA.
NO WAY.
YOU SEE, I LOVE SHOUJO MANGA
TOSS
WOW...
I LOVE READING ROMANCE.
I DON'T HAVE AN EYE FOR THESE THINGS.
HAVE YOU TASTED THE NEWEST PRODUCTS?
HARU-CHAN, HARU-CHAN.
OKAY.
I'LL GET BOTH.
THEY'RE PROS AT MAKING THE PRODUCT LOOK TASTY.
THE PACKAGING HAS EYE-CATCHING COLORS.
WHICH ONE TASTES GOOD?
Sweet
Sweet
Yeah
I DID, I DID.
BUT I GAVE IT UP. WORK WAS MORE FUN FOR ME.
YEAH, I DID BECAUSE I LIKED IT.
DID YOU GO TO A BAKING CLASS?
CHIE-SAN, I HEARD YOU USED TO MAKE SWEETS.
TOWA TOLD ME.

THE CAKE KNIFE YOU FORGOT HAD YOUR NAME WRITTEN ON IT.
SEIJI FOUND OUT THAT YOU CAME OVER TO OUR HOUSE, BUT...IT'S NOT AN ISSUE WITH YOU, IS IT?
NOPE.
IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
IT WAS FUN, WASN'T IT? WISH I COULD HAVE GREETED HIM A HAPPY BIRTHDAY BEFORE I LEFT.
YEAH!! WHY'D YOU GO HOME?!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU WERE TELLING ME TO GIVE YOUR BACK A PUSH.
SO THAT'S WHY I...
FELT LIKE I WAS SENDING YOU AWAY OR SOMETHING AND THAT BUGGED ME A LITTLE!
I MEAN, IT WOULD'VE BEEN OKAY. SEIJI NOTICED IT ANYWAY.
THAT DAY, HE WENT TO VISIT MAMA.
ON MY BIRTHDAY, I GO TO SEE HER TOO.

IF MAMA DIDN'T EXIST, THEN I WOULDN'T BE HERE.
MY BIRTHDAY IS A DAY WHERE I REMEMBER TO BE THANKFUL FOR OTHERS.
THAT'S WHY IT MADE ME A LITTLE SAD WHEN YOU LEFT.
I THINK IT'S MUCH MORE FUN WHEN THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE AROUND.
IN THE SUMMER, I HAVE THIS CUSTOM OF GOING TO VISIT MY HOME-TOWN...
THIS YEAR, TOWA WILL BE STAYING AT MY PARENTS' DURING THE SUMMER.
THE SCHOOL HE WANTS TO GET INTO IS CLOSER TO MY PARENTS', SO IF HE MAKES IT, HE'LL HAVE TO COMMUTE FROM THERE.
CHIE-SAN SAID...
THAT IT DOESN'T COST A THING TO FALL IN LOVE, BUT...
YOU'RE GOOD FRIENDS WITH KAWABATA-SAN, AREN'T YOU..?
AFTER YOU GUYS REUNITED, DO YOU CALL EACH OTHER OFTEN?
KAWA-BATA-KUN IS THOUGHT-FUL.
YEAH, I AGREE.
BUT IT'S OKAY. IF I MISS HIM, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS TO GO SEE HIM.
SHE'S A TALKATIVE PERSON.

I SHOULD JUST MIND MY OWN BUSINESS, HUH...?
NOT AT ALL.
SEIJI GOBBLED UP THE CAKE!!
IT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!!
I SEE...
IT'S TRUE.
SOME-ONE WHO...
GOES AND MEETS OTHERS ...
I HAD FUN TALK-ING ABOUT BOYS WITH YOU.
I LIKE SHOUJO MANGA TOO.
YOU TOLD ME THAT IT WON'T COST A THING TO FALL IN LOVE, RIGHT?
I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
WE'RE LIKE TWO PEAS IN A POD!
SHE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY, SHE HAS TO COME AND SAY IT DIRECTLY, OR SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO GET IT ACROSS.
I WONDER HOW SHE FEELS..
ABOUT SEIJI RIGHT NOW...

IF SOMEONE LIKE HER KEPT STARING AT ME,
BUZZ
BUZZ
EVEN I WOULD GET NERVOUS.
YOUR CELL...
YOU KNOW WHAT? WHEN I LOOK AT YOU,
MY HEART FEELS A SQUEEZE.
THE WAY SEIJI-KUN LOOKS WHEN HE'S LOOKING AT YOU...
AND THE WAY YOU LOOK WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT HIM IS JUST TOO CUTE.
I CAN PICTURE HOW HAPPY HE LOOKED JUST BY HEARING YOU TALK ABOUT IT.
LOOKS LIKE TOWA'S OUT OF CRAM SCHOOL.
OKAY.
I... LIKE HER...
AH.
YUSHI
THAT'S RIGHT.
I BOUGHT SOME FOR YOU TOO.
HUH?
I THOUGHT THIS ONE LOOKED TASTY.

WHAT...?
SO IT WASN'T LIKE I WAS SENDING HER AWAY?
SO, THANKS FOR GIVING ME THAT PUSH.
I TEND TO INTERFERE TOO MUCH, JUST LIKE I'M DOING WITH YOU.
YOU KNOW, I WANT TO BE MODERATE WITH HOW CLOSE I GET TO PEOPLE.
TAKE HIM AWAY FROM ME.
I THINK A PART OF ME IS AFRAID THAT SOMEONE MIGHT...
I JUST NEVER TELL SEIJI ABOUT IT...
YOU MAKE ME WONDER WHETHER SHE'D LAUGH A LOT LIKE YOU IF SHE WERE STILL ALIVE.
WHEN I LOOK AT YOU, I START THINKING ABOUT MY MOM.
WE DON'T HAVE MANY PICTURES OF HER...
I ONLY REMEMBER HOW SHE LOOKS WHEN SHE LAUGHS
YEAH, WHEN YOU LAUGH.
SO I... REMIND YOU OF YOUR MOM?
BUT, SEIJI DOESN'T COMPARE OTHER PEOPLE TO MAMA.
THAT'S WHY I DON'T THINK MY MOM AND I HAVE ANYTHING TO FEEL SAD ABOUT.
AND I...
SO EVEN NOW, IN SEIJI'S EYES, I THINK THAT THE PERSON HE CAPTURED IN HIS MIND, IS OF HER SMILING.
THE *"IEI" WE USE WAS A PICTURE SEIJI TOOK OF HER.

*T/N: photo of a deceased person

I HAVE FAITH IN THE WAY SEIJI SEES PEOPLE.
YOU BOTH ARE WONDERFUL PEOPLE.
THANKS.
"Oh, my g-"
WH-OH ∞
I THINK I MAY HAVE SAID MORE THAN I SHOULD HAVE.
IT JUST CAME OUT OF MY MOUTH.
AND I COULDN'T STOP MYSELF.
DOES CHIE-SAN... NOT HAVE FEELINGS FOR SEIJI ANYMORE?
THEN IT'S OKAY.
IT'S OKAY AS LONG AS THEY ARE JUST FRIENDS.
YOU SHOULD GO OUT WITH ME
YOU LIKE ME MORE THAN YOU LIKE ANY OTHER GUYS, RIGHT?

.....
YEAH...
HUH?
THANKS FOR WALKING ME HOME
DO YOU GET WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY...?
I GET IT. YOU WANT US TO DATE, RIGHT?
BUT THINGS ARE GONNA BE DIFFERENT FROM NOW.
WHY DO YOU...
HAVE TO SAY STUFF LIKE THAT?

YOU NEED TO GO GET YOUR EYES CHECKED!
.....
YOU CAN PROBA-BLY SEE BETTER...
WITH YOUR HAIR BACK.

KTUNK
BRAT
SPLASH
SPLASH
DON'T STARE AT ME.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME LOOKING?
tousle
tousle

HELLO.
I'M HOME. NEED ME TO HELP WITH ANYTHING?
WELL, HOW ABOUT MAKING SOME MISO SOUP?
I'M GONNA USE THE TOFU.
Oh, and the nameko mushrooms, and the green onions too!
LET'S GO OUT SOMEWHERE FOR THE SUMMER!
HM, WE SHOULD.
WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO, HARU?

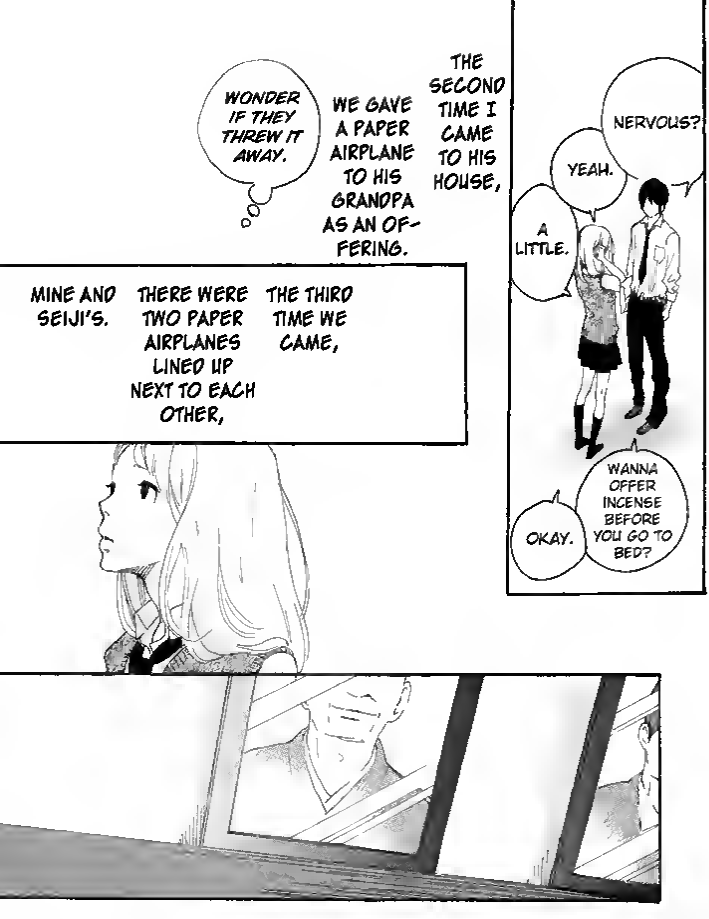
A PLACE THAT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE THAT.
SUMMER IS HERE!
I'LL THINK IT OVER.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
SEIJI...
YOU KEEP THE LETTER I GAVE YOU AS A PRESENT...
IN THE POCKET OF YOUR APRON, DON'T YOU?

OH,
THAT'S RIGHT.
WHEN YOU'RE ON SUMMER BREAK, WE'LL GO OVER TO MY PARENTS'.
OKAY.
MAMA, SEIJI IS SHARING YOUR DUTIES AS MOTHER IN YOUR PLACE.
ARE WE HAVING HAMBURGERS TODAY?
I LIKE THE HAMBURGERS YOU MAKE MORE THAN THE ONES AT THE RESTAURANT.
REALLY?
'CAUSE THEY'RE GINORMOUS.
THEN I SHOULD MAKE BIG ONES.
EXTRA-LARGE.
WITH THOSE LARGE HANDS OF HIS,
HE ACTS AS A MOM IN YOUR PLACE.

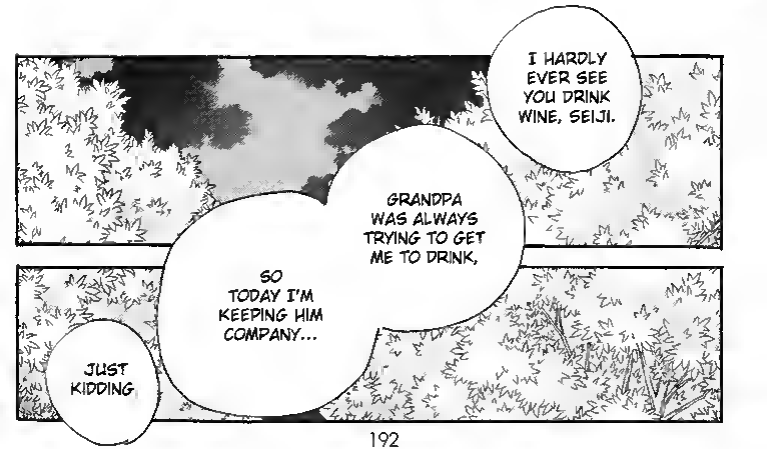
IN LATE JULY,
WE LAID SEIJI'S GRAND-FATHER'S ASHES TO REST. HE HAD PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR.
WE LEFT OUR TEARS BEHIND ONE YEAR AGO.
INSTEAD, WE TRY TO REMEM-BER THE WARMTH HE MADE US FEEL.
ON THIS UN-FORGETTABLE MEMORIAL SERVICE, WE PLACE OUR HANDS TO-GETHER AND SEND HIM OUR PRAYERS...

ONE YEAR AGO, WHEN I FIRST CAME TO THIS HOUSE, IT WAS A QUIET PLACE.
HE WORE A BLACK SUIT...
AND I MY SCHOOL UNI-FORM.
HARU-CHAN, YOU CAN USE SEIJI'S ROOM.
OKAY ...
AT THAT TIME,
I WAS ...
IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
HUH?
WERE THEY MARKING HIS HEIGHT...?
WHAT'S THIS?

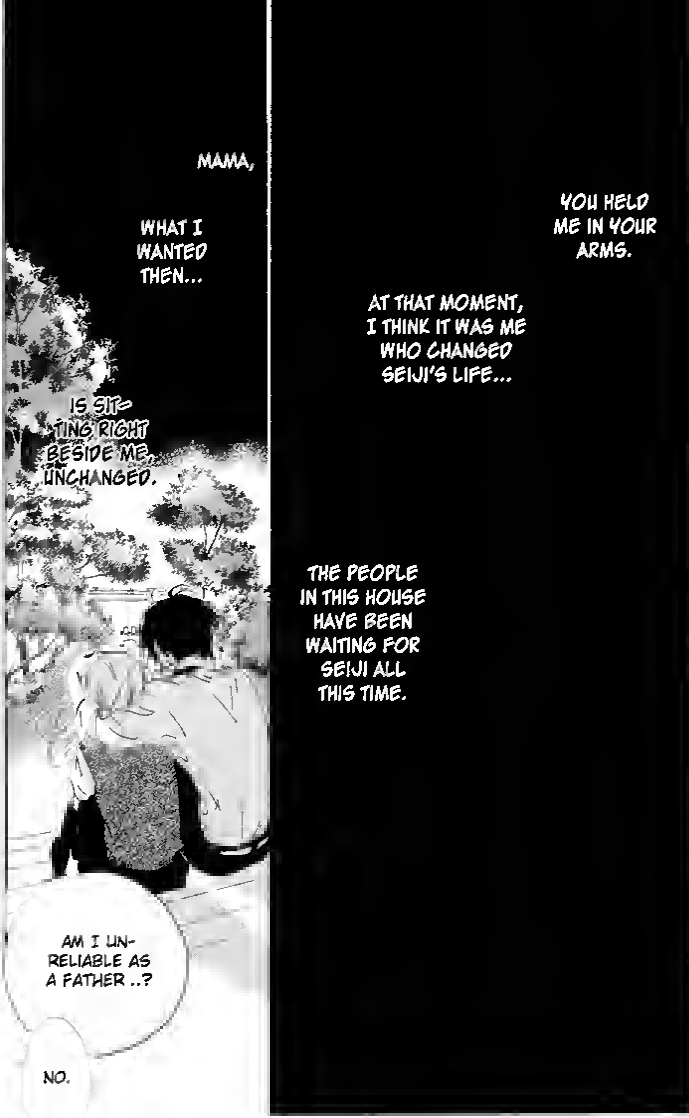
WOW! SEIJI WAS SO TINY...
TICK
TICK
...HASN'T STOPPED.
TICK
THE CLOCK ...
TICK
TICK
TICK
...
?
GREAT-GRANDMA'S PROBABLY TIRED.
CAN'T IT WAIT 'TIL TOMOR-ROW?
WHAT'S WRONG?
GRANDMA'S ASLEEP...
NO...
I JUST HAD SOMETHING TO TALK TO HER ABOUT.


WONDER IF THEY THREW IT AWAY.
WE GAVE A PAPER AIRPLANE TO HIS GRANDPA AS AN OFFERING.
THE SECOND TIME I CAME TO HIS HOUSE,
NERVOUS?
YEAH.
A LITTLE.
WANNA OFFER INCENSE BEFORE YOU GO TO BED?
OKAY.
MINE AND SEIJI'S.
THERE WERE TWO PAPER AIRPLANES LINED UP NEXT TO EACH OTHER,
THE THIRD TIME WE CAME,
I should have
I used to fly lots of paper planes with my grandpa
"A long time ago

GRANDPA LOVED THIS VERANDA.
HE'D SIT HERE...
AND DRINK HIS WINE.
NOW, LET'S GO
visited him more often


I HARDLY EVER SEE YOU DRINK WINE, SEIJI.
GRANDPA WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO GET ME TO DRINK,
SO TODAY I'M KEEPING HIM COMPANY...
JUST KIDDING

THERE'S
ONE THING THAT I ACTUALLY REMEMBER.
I HAD MY BIRTHDAY RIGHT AROUND THE TIME THAT I MET YOU.
AND ON THAT DAY, WHEN MAMA SAID THAT I COULD HAVE ANYTHING I WANTED, DO YOU KNOW WHAT I SAID?
"You can have whatever you want."
I TOLD HER, "I WANT SEIJI."


MAMA,
WHAT I WANTED THEN...
IS SITTING RIGHT BESIDE ME, UNCHANGED.
AM I UNRELIABLE AS A FATHER ..?
NO.
THE PEOPLE IN THIS HOUSE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR SEIJI ALL THIS TIME.
AT THAT MOMENT, I THINK IT WAS ME WHO CHANGED SEIJI'S LIFE...
YOU HELD ME IN YOUR ARMS.

I ALWAYS MADE HER SO ANGRY.
"THAT'S NOT IT."
"NO."
YOUR MOM DUMPED ME A LONG TIME AGO...
YOU KNOW...
rustle
"ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY OVER THERE."
"STAY THERE."
"YOU DON'T GET IT."
SHE ONLY HAD ENOUGH ROOM IN HER HEART FOR YOU.
I TRIED THINKING ABOUT WHETHER I ACTUALLY DID ANYTHING FOR HER, BUT IT JUST MADE ME FEEL SO MISERABLE.
WHEN SHE PASSED AWAY,

WHY?
NOTIFICATION OF DIVORCE
Heisei Year Month Day Nott
BUT...
AS LONG AS YOU NEEDED ME...
...I NEEDED YOU TOO.

YOU DON'T NEED IT?
SO MAMA DIDN'T LOVE SEIJI?
I CAN'T GIVE IT BACK EVEN IF I WANTED TO...
I DON'T LIKE IT WHEN THINGS ARE DONE THIS WAY.
HE'S SULKING.

RIGHT NOW...

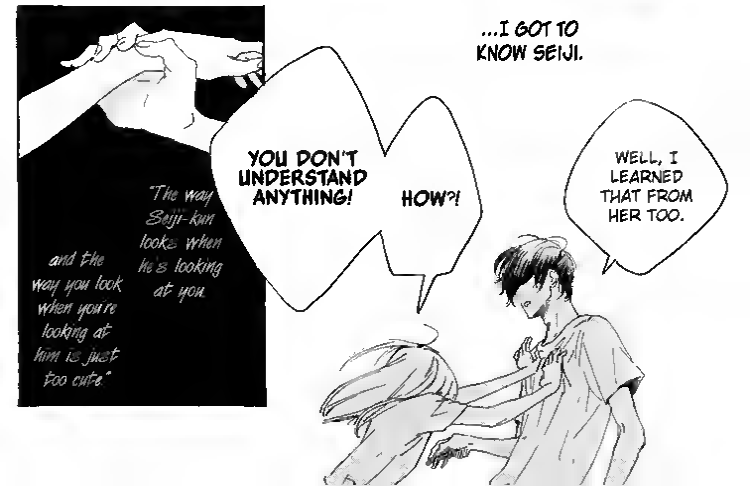
STAYING WITH ME.

I WONDER WHAT'S THE POINT OF HIM...

I...

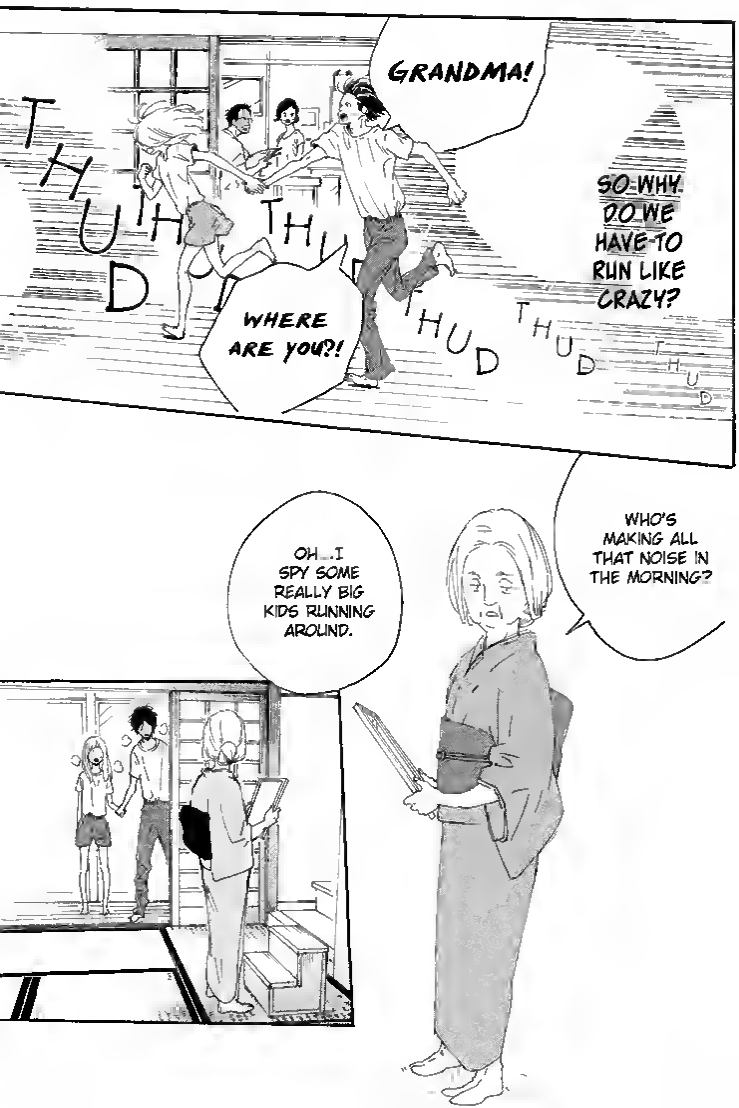
...THEN I DON'T NEED HIM EITHER.
DON'T TRY TO ERASE MAMA'S FEELINGS FOR YOU.
IT'S NOT TRUE.
SHE WAS ONLY THINK-ING ABOUT YOU.
ALL SHE WANTED WAS FOR YOU TO BE HAPPY.
I DO NEED HIM.

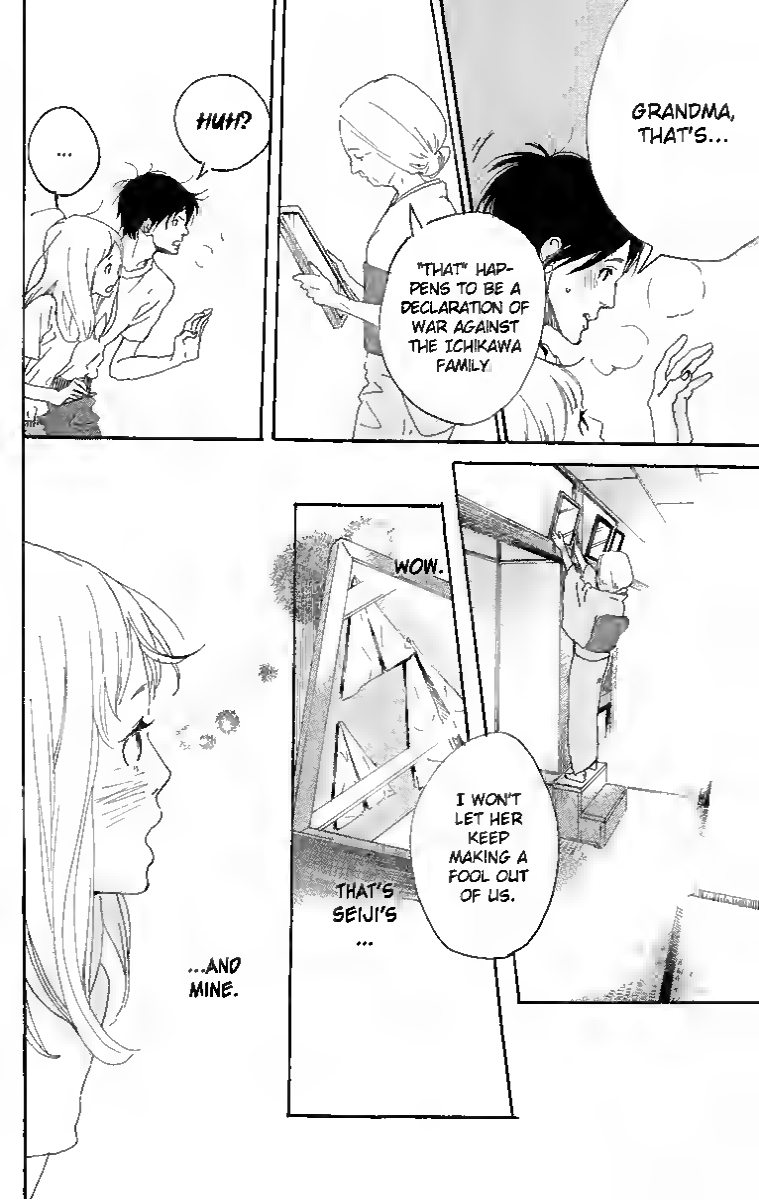
TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE.
I'LL BE OKAY.
WHEN MAMA WAS DYING, SHE TAUGHT ME A GOOD LESSON
SHE SAID THAT I HAD TO BE LOVING TO PEOPLE.
AND THAT'S HOW I'VE BEEN LIVING ALL THIS TIME.
AND BECAUSE I LIVED MY LIFE GETTING CLOSE...
TO PEOPLE ...

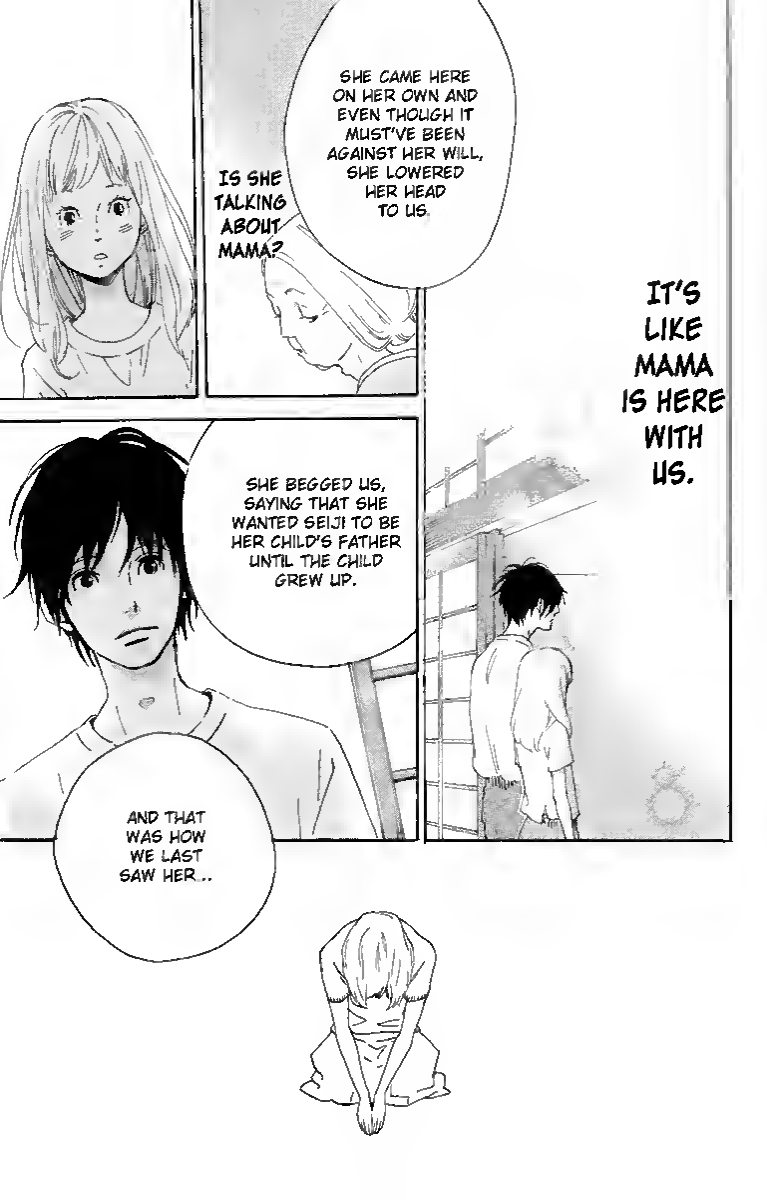

...I GOT TO KNOW SEIJI.
WELL, I LEARNED THAT FROM HER TOO.
HOW?!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING!
"The way Seiji-kun looks when he's looking at you
and the way you look when you're looking at him is just too cute."

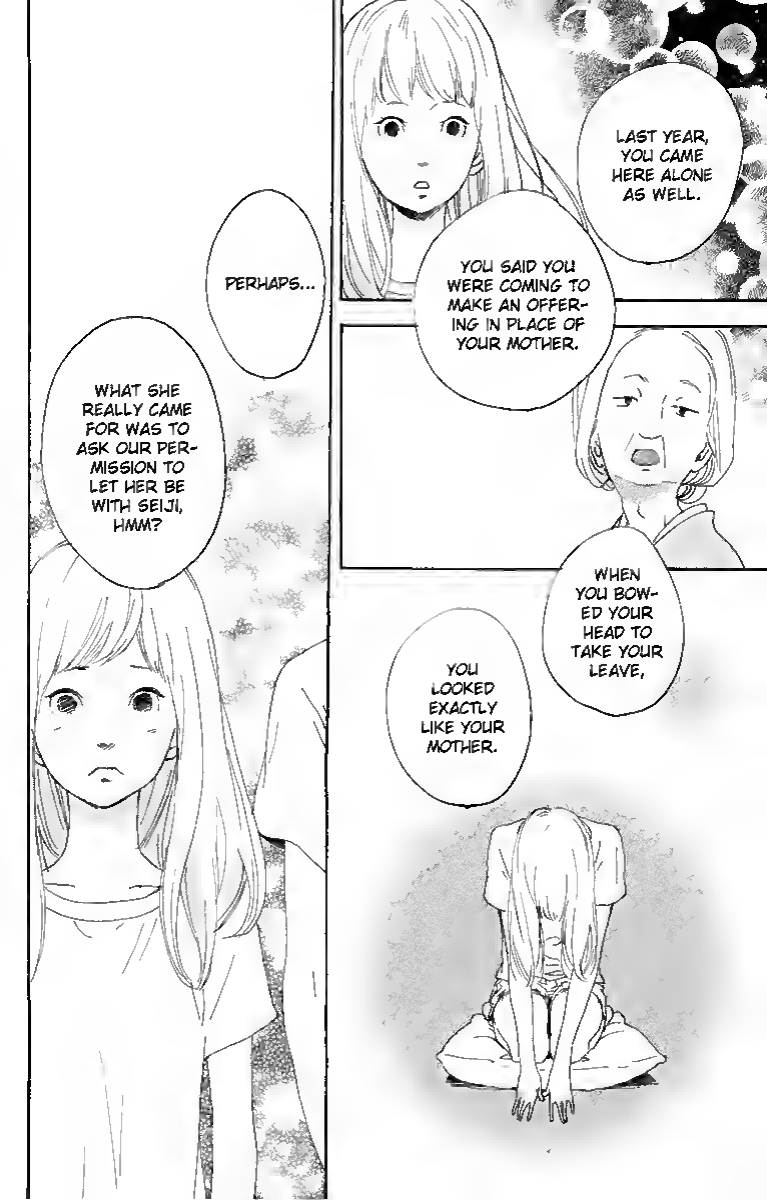
AHH!
THAT HAND JUST NOW.
GRANDMA.
A YEAR AGO,
I WAS EAVES-DROP-PING ON PEOPLE IN THIS HOUSE.
AT THE TIME, GREAT-GRANDMA CALLED MAMA A "MEROU".

COME ON,
HARU.
I HAVE NEVER, NOT EVEN FOR A SECOND, THOUGHT OF TURNING THAT THING IN.
NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, IT'S STILL A MEMENTO OF HERS.
YEAH, BUT YOU WERE TRYING TO THROW IT AWAY YOURSELF.


THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD
GRANDMA!
WHERE ARE YOU?!
SO WHY DO WE HAVE TO RUN LIKE CRAZY?
OH...I SPY SOME REALLY BIG KIDS RUNNING AROUND.
WHO'S MAKING ALL THAT NOISE IN THE MORNING?


GRANDMA, THAT'S...
"THAT" HAPPENS TO BE A DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST THE ICHIKAWA FAMILY.
HUH?
...
WOW.
I WON'T LET HER KEEP MAKING A FOOL OUT OF US.
THAT'S SEIJI'S ...
...AND MINE.


SHE CAME HERE ON HER OWN AND EVEN THOUGH IT MUST'VE BEEN AGAINST HER WILL, SHE LOWERED HER HEAD TO US.
IS SHE TALKING ABOUT MAMA?
IT'S LIKE MAMA IS HERE WITH US.
SHE BEGGED US, SAYING THAT SHE WANTED SEIJI TO BE HER CHILD'S FATHER UNTIL THE CHILD GREW UP.
AND THAT WAS HOW WE LAST SAW HER..


LAST YEAR, YOU CAME HERE ALONE AS WELL.
YOU SAID YOU WERE COMING TO MAKE AN OFFERING IN PLACE OF YOUR MOTHER.
WHEN YOU BOWED YOUR HEAD TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE,
YOU LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE YOUR MOTHER.
PERHAPS...
WHAT SHE REALLY CAME FOR WAS TO ASK OUR PERMISSION TO LET HER BE WITH SEIJI, HMM?

I WILL NEVER FORGET HOW I LAST PICTURED HER.
THANK YOU FOR COMING TO SEND GRAND-FATHER OFF YESTERDAY...
I'LL USE THIS OCCASION TO LEAVE THE HOUSE TO MY CHILDREN.
DON'T KEEP STANDING THERE IN YOUR PAJAMAS! GO AND GET CHANGED!
WE'RE HAVING BREAK-FAST.
SEIJI,
WAS MAMA...

*T/N pickled veggies
HARU, PASS ME THE SOY SAUCE.
OH, OKAY
HERE, EAT THIS. IT'S OUR HOMEMADE *TSUKEMONO.
AHHH! THANK YOU.
HARU-CHAN, DO YOU PUT GREEN ONIONS IN YOUR NATTO?
AHH! YES!
GRANDMA, THE SOY SAUCE.
IT'S DELICIOUS.
DAD, YOU'RE PUTTING TOO MUCH SOY SAUCE.
ISN'T IT?
WELL, I WASN'T LOOKING.
WAS SHE TRYING TO RETURN YOU HOME?
HE WENT TO OFFER INCENSE TO HIS GRANDFATHER.
O-OH.
GREAT-GRANDMA, SEEN SEIJI?

UM..
I'M RE-TURNING THIS.
I WASHED IT CLEAN FOR YOU.
SEI-...UH... IT MADE HIM VERY HAPPY.
YES,
AND HE ENJOYED EATING IT VERY MUCH.
I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO MAKE OSEKIHAN ONE DAY.
THROUGH YOU,
I CAN ALMOST SENSE HOW YOU'VE SPENT YOUR TIME WITH SEIJI.
HARU...
YOU'RE GOING TO ADOPT A SON-IN-LAW INTO THE FAMILY, RIGHT?
IT'LL BE YOUR JOB TO PROTECT THE HOUSE AND GRAVE
IF YOU DON'T, THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY.
...
Grr

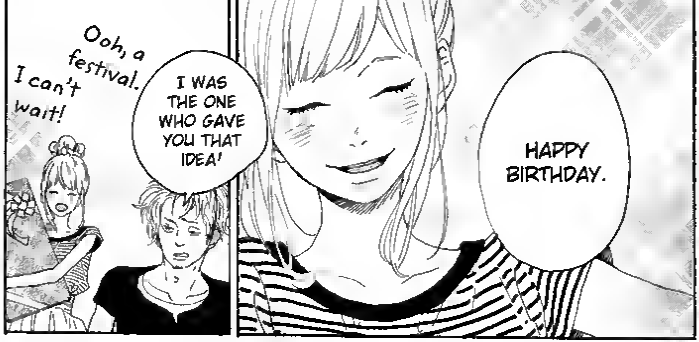
FOR YOUR SAKE,
SEIJI CAME BACK HOME.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE,
AND SEIJI WON'T BE THE ONE TO DECIDE FOR YOU EITHER
FROM NOW ON, MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICES.
SO I CAN KEEP ON BEING HARU ICHIKAWA?
DONE PACKING UP TO GO HOME?
W-
WAIT
...
I WANT TO SHOW MAMA WHAT YOUR ROOM LOOKS LIKE AT LEAST ONCE.

HEY! HEY!
SO WAS THAT WHERE THEY MARKED YOUR HEIGHT? I KNEW IT.
CAN I TRY TOO?
MAMA'S WATCHING, SO STAND STILL, OKAY?
OKAY.
BRINGS BACK MEMORIES.
SOMETHING THAT YOU HAD DONE FOR YOU...
...IS WHAT I'M NOW DOING FOR YOU TOO, HUH?

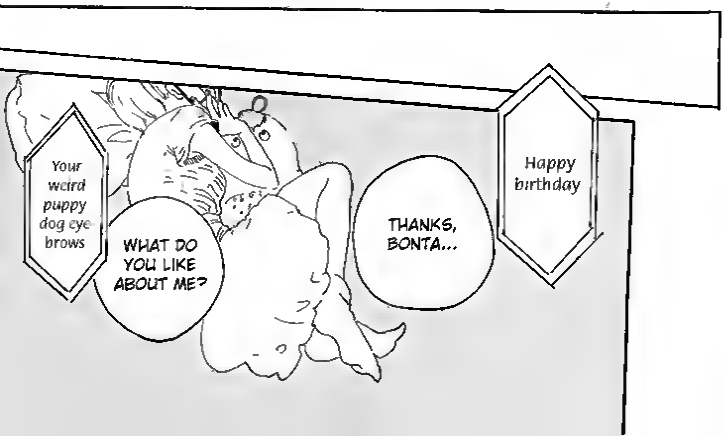
IT'S NOT A PROBLEM FOR YOU TO AT LEAST HAVE...
A GIRL-FRIEND
I CAN LEARN TO LOVE THE PERSON YOU CHOOSE
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT, HARU...
SEIJI,
YOUR FACE IS RED.
MAMA'S THE ONE WHO'S WORRIED.
I'M LIVING FOR MAMA'S SAKE, SO I UNDER-STAND THESE THINGS.
I GET IT, SO LET'S JUST LEAVE IT AT THAT.
IT'S TRUE.
NO MATTER...
...HOW HARD I TRY...

THAT'S WHY...
I WANT YOU TO GRANT ME MY ONE SELFISH REQUEST.
Happy birthday Haru
Today you get to be a princess Haru
You can have whatever you want"
IT'S NOT GOING TO BE ME.
IT WON'T BE ME,
MAMA.
...I CAN'T BE HER.
OKAY, OKAY.
tmp

SOME-TIME IN THE FUTURE,
I MIGHT FALL IN LOVE WITH SOME-ONE...
AND GET MARRIED TOO.
BUT DOESN'T IT SOUND CRAZY FOR SEIJI, WHO HAS RAISED ME,
TO HAVE NO ONE TO BE CLOSE TO HIM THEN?
SO...
WHATEVER HAPPENS, FORGIVE HIM, OKAY?
WOW! IT'S OSEKIHAN!
TODAY, YOU GET TO HAVE THE HAMBURGERS YOU LIKE SO MUCH.
WE'RE MESSING UP THE TRA-DITION SO BAD!
I BOUGHT YOU A YUKATA.
THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO GO SEE THE FIRE-WORKS THIS SUMMER.


Ooh, a festival.
I can't wait!
I WAS THE ONE WHO GAVE YOU THAT IDEA!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

SOUNDS FUN.
THEN I'LL INVITE THE SAMEJIMA FAMILY.
WE SHOULD ALL GO, LIKE WHEN WE HAD THE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL.


Your weird puppy dog eye brows
WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT ME?
THANKS, BONTA...
Happy birthday

BONTA, I HATE YOU.
But I like you.
WHEN MAMA FELL INTO A DEEP SLEEP,
I WAS STILL A SMALL CHILD.
AND THEN I REALIZED THAT THEY WERE ALL THINGS THAT I ENDED UP LOSING.
EVERYTHING I WANTED WOULD GET BROKEN AND COULD NO LONGER BE USED.
Towa
It's me, Towa
Happy birthday
I love the summer! (LOL)
Hikari
(^_^)/Haru♡
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Let's stay friends forever!! I love you Haru!
Hikari

HARU-CHAN, THAT YUKATA LOOKS GREAT ON YOU!

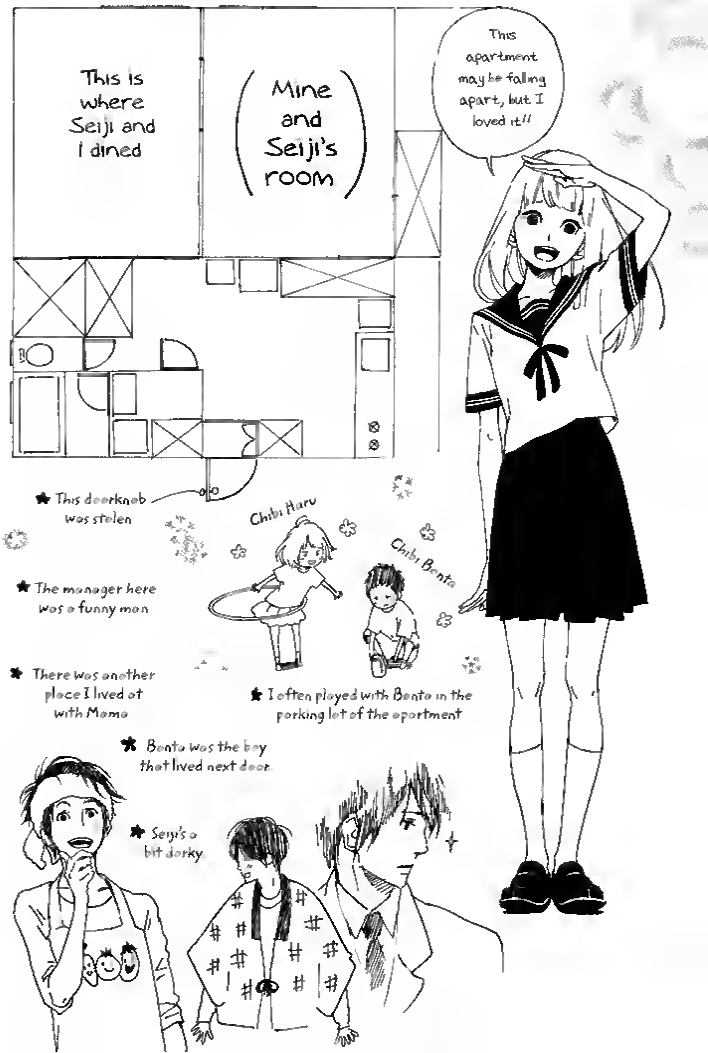
I DON'T REALLY THINK IT LOOKS GOOD ON ME THOUGH...
KAWA-BATA-KUN, SEIJI-KUN.
OH, ARE YOU OFF OF WORK?
YEAH, I RUSHED STRAIGHT HERE
SHE HAS A SMILE FOR EVERYBODY.
HARU.
TOWA!
I HEARD FROM CHIE-SAN IS IT TRUE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE LIVING FAR AWAY?!
FLINCH
WOULD TOWA BE THE ONE...
WHO KNOWS HOW TO TEAR THAT MASK OFF HER FACE?

SOUNDS PRETTY FUN
THAT...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN BY THAT BUT...
YOU SHOULD BOARD AT OUR HOUSE
YOU CAN'T LIVE APART FROM YOUR MOM!
HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SO, WHAT I'M SAYING IS...
YOU GOTTA MAKE IT CLEAR!
MAKE WHAT CLEAR?
...

IS WHAT I AM BURNING INTO MY MEMORY.

WHAT I WILL NEVER LOSE AND WHAT WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR...

♣ Haru and Seiji's apartment in Volume 1


This is where Seiji and I dined
Mine and Seiji's room
This apartment may be falling apart, but I loved it!!
★ This doorknob was stolen
Chibi Haru
Chibi Bento
★ The manager here was a funny man
★ There was another place I lived at with Mama
★ I often played with Bento in the parking lot of the apartment
★ Bento was the boy that lived next door
★ Seiji's a bit dorky

From My House.

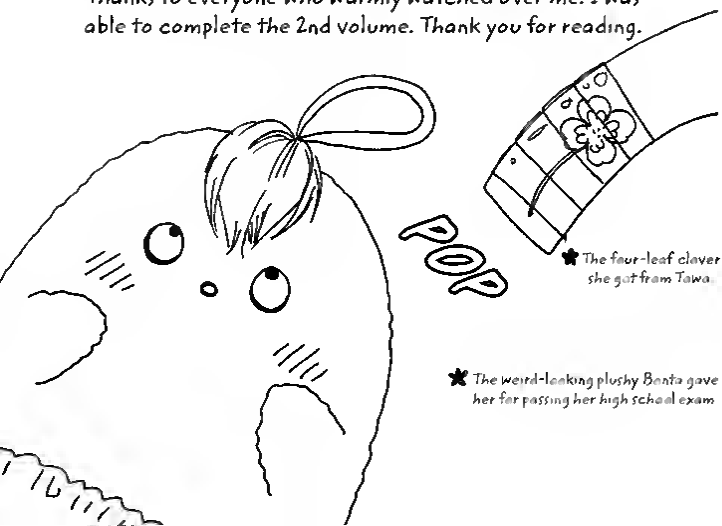
〒101-8050

ICHIBANCHO, CHIYODA, TOKYO, 2-5-10

BESSATSU MARGARET PUBLISHING

YAMAKAWA AIJI

Thanks to everyone who warmly watched over me. I was able to complete the 2nd volume. Thank you for reading.



★ The four-leaf clover she got from Tawa.

★ The weird-looking plushy Bonta gave her for passing her high school exam